

The United States Marine Corps

HITTING THE BEACHES

THE FIRST ARMORED AMPHIBIAN BATTALION
IN WORLD WAR II



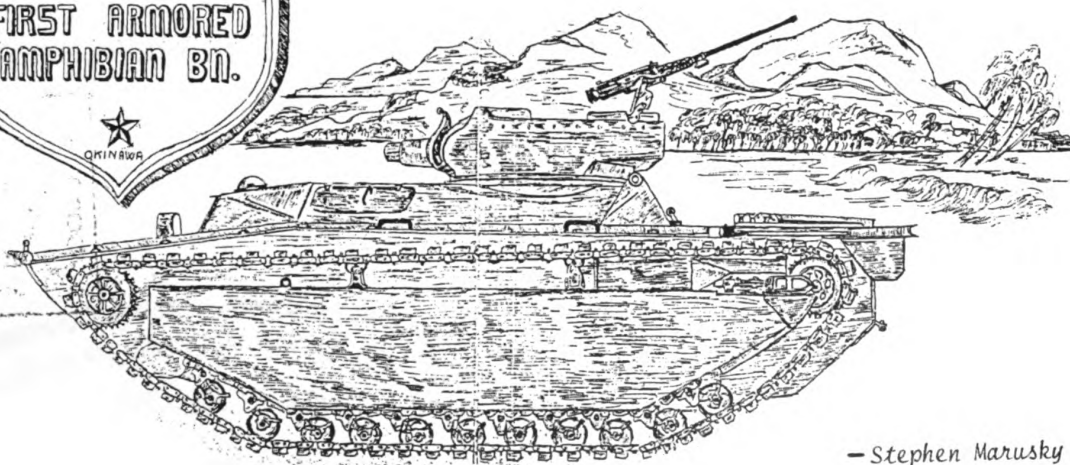




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—Stephen Marusky

The United States Marine Corps

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THE FIRST ARMORED AMPHIBIAN BATTALION IN WORLD WAR II 1943 - 1945

- ☆ KWAJALEIN
- ☆ GUAM
- ☆ OKINAWA



Compiled and edited by Dale L. Barker

Atlanta, Georgia, 1996
The First Armored Amphibian Battalion

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1996

***To our fellow Marines
in the First Armored Amphibian Battalion
who fell in battle
on reefs and beaches
far from home.***

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COLLABORATORS ON THIS VOLUME

This history of the First Armored Amphibian Battalion, USMC, represents the combined efforts of over fifty men of the Battalion. There were 47 joint authors who wrote of their experiences. Others, including 22 of the authors, contributed photos, documents, graphics, money, or time. Without the participation of all these men, this history would not have come into being.

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Non-member financial contributors include two gracious ladies whose husbands had served in the Battalion: Lola Tremblay, with her great quilt raffle, and Ella Crosby, who gave in memory of her husband, Lieutenant Thomas M. Crosby. We appreciate the contribution from the members of Buckeye Post 1598 of the VFW in Columbus, Ohio, who responded generously to a proposal from Charles E. Perkins of B Company.

Valuable support was not always financial. We are indebted to Jerry D. Brooks of the 2d Armored Amphibian Battalion, Jim Miller of the 3d Armored, and Larry L. Woodward, who wrote the 3d Armored history. They provided copies of their histories and very welcome advice and encouragement in producing our own history. We appreciate the courtesy of the Marine Corps Historical Center, which provided us with a copy of some rosters and other documents.

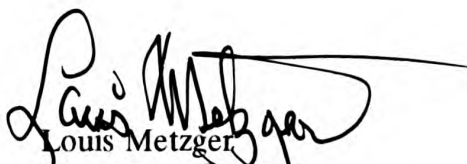
The editor is grateful to three members of the Battalion who served as a panel of readers to proofread and critique the text—Earl M. Hill, Carl Zenger, and General Louis Metzger. Thanks go also to local friends in Atlanta, Robert J. Kyle and Catherine Taylor, for their generous technical and editorial assistance. Special thanks go to Donald Ferchau, who handled the finances, and to the five company representatives, who kept the membership in touch with the project. Finally, the editor is grateful to his wife, Caroline, for her patience, good humor, and support. We rejoiced together to see the project completed.

FOREWORD

This is the story of one Marine Corps battalion during World War II, based on the memories and recollections of its members fifty years ago. It is obvious this two-year period was a most important aspect in all our lives. For most of us the memories are deeply etched in our minds. A special thanks should be given to Dr. Dale L. Barker (former Technical Sergeant, USMCR), who spent untold hours and months putting together our widely varied recollection of events. Without his tremendous effort this history would never have been written.

This was a special battalion, the first of its kind. It was formed, trained, and deployed for combat in a period of five months. The mission of our armored amphibians (amphibious tanks) was to lead the assault on enemy-held beaches. If we failed or faltered, the entire operation would be placed in jeopardy. WE NEVER DID. Our battalion led the attack across the Pacific with the landings on Roi and Namur in the Marshall Islands, Guam in the Marianas Islands, and finally Okinawa, the last great battle in World War II.

It is appropriate that this history be dedicated to those who served in this battalion, to our comrades who fell in combat, and to our loved ones who faced the worry and concern for those in combat.



Louis Metzger
Lieutenant General
U. S. Marine Corps (Retired)



Louis Metzger, Lt. General, USMC (Ret.)

Military discipline was visibly tighter at First Armored than at neighboring outfits in the Pacific. Our Battalion Commander, Major Louis Metzger, never relaxed his persistent training schedule. Although we groused and complained, as troops have done from time immemorial, our morale was excellent and we were proud of the First Armored. In retrospect, I am convinced that our high state of combat readiness—attained and retained at Major Metzger's insistence—paid off in holding our battle casualties to a minimum.

—Earl M. Hill, PFC, Company B,
writing in 1993

LIEUTENANT GENERAL LOUIS METZGER, USMC

Lt. General Louis Metzger retired from active duty on 31 March 1973, following 33 years of commissioned service. He saw his last tour of duty on Okinawa as Commanding General, III Marine Amphibious Force.

Born 18 November 1916 in San Francisco, he graduated from Stanford University with an A.B. degree in 1939 and entered the Marine Corps as a 2d lieutenant on 1 July 1939. After completing Officers Basic School he served on the *USS New Orleans* in the Hawaii area and with the 2d Marine Division in San Diego. Immediately after Pearl Harbor he sailed with the 1st Marine Provisional Brigade to Samoa. Promoted to captain in May 1942, he returned to the U.S. for training in tank warfare at Ft. Knox and Camp Elliott. He was promoted to major in April 1943.

On 20 August 1943 Major Metzger assumed command of the First Armored Amphibian Battalion at the Boat Basin in Oceanside, California. He retained command for 25 months, through most of the Battalion's history. He led the First Armored in combat through three invasions: Roi-Namur in the Kwajalein Atoll, Guam, and Okinawa. As battalion commander he pursued a vigorous program of training which achieved a high level of combat readiness and a high rate of survival. He is credited with being the first to conceive of and develop the employment of LVTA-4 amphibian tanks and their 75mm howitzers for artillery missions. He was promoted to lieutenant colonel in January 1945. He was awarded the Legion of Merit for exceptionally meritorious service during the assault on Okinawa. In late June, at the end of the Okinawa campaign, Lt. Colonel Metzger was transferred from command of the First Armored Amphibian Battalion to duty with the 6th Marine Division.

At the end of World War II Lt. Colonel Metzger saw duty in Japan and China. He subsequently held combat commands in the Korean and Vietnam wars. At various times he served at Headquarters Marine Corps in Washington, other posts in the U.S., and abroad in Japan, London, and elsewhere. He held regimental, division, and corps commands, in which he earned numerous medals, decorations, and citations. By action of the President and Senate of the United States, he was advanced to three-star rank on 28 December 1971.

General Metzger lives now in San Diego. He has actively supported the annual reunions of the First Armored Amphibian Battalion and, when reunions were held in San Diego, he helped to plan and organize them.

PREFACE

The history of World War II in the Pacific is well known and well documented. Many volumes have been written describing and analyzing that war—from Pearl Harbor to Hiroshima, from high-level strategy to personal combat. They tell in much detail how the war was waged in the air, at sea, under the sea, and on the beaches. Despite all that, we believe we have good reasons for adding one more volume to the record.

First was the special nature of the First Armored Amphibian Battalion, the first of only three Marine battalions to strike enemy beaches in amphibian tanks. Our LVTA-1s and LVTA-4s were new to amphibious warfare then. Amphibious assault vehicles produced later were of different design. Those lumbering monsters—as we knew them—came into being, played their part in history, and then left the stage. The story of armored amphibians in the Pacific War, and of the men who fought in them, should be told.

We are also aware that, unless we do it ourselves, the history of the First Armored will be lost. Histories of military units are often written of armies, divisions or even regiments, but rarely of units as small as battalions. We cannot rely on being included adequately in the histories of Marine Corps divisions or regiments. The First Armored was an independent unit, not permanently attached to any larger force. In three invasions, the battalion was attached each time to a different Marine division. The histories of those divisions refer to the First Armored only incidentally, and all of them together tell only a small part of our history.

Finally, the officers and men of the First Armored want this history because it is our own story of World War II as we experienced it. The names of far-away places, historic battles, and old comrades call up images we do not wish to forget, and do not wish to be forgotten by those who come after us.

Although a Battalion history in some form had been discussed earlier, the first definite action in that direction came at the 1992 reunion in Danvers, Massachusetts, when those present voted to support such a project and designated Dale Barker as editor

and compiler. In response to a "Call for Contributions," over fifty men eventually submitted photos, documents, diaries, their recollections, and other material to help produce a history. Besides the writers and other contributors of material, several men provided vital financial support for the project, the five company representatives of the Battalion were instrumental in disseminating information about the project, and others contributed in various ways.

This story is told, not by a single writer, but by 47 authors, all recalling their days in the First Armored Amphibian Battalion. The volume is, therefore, an anthology of reminiscences from men who experienced and lived the history of the Battalion. To these first-hand accounts, the editor has added short introductory and transitional sections to show the relation of the personal accounts to each other and to the war of which they were a part. They are intended only to provide a military, technical, historical, or geographical context for the recollections of the 48 authors.

We recognize that gaps exist in the record presented here. To whatever extent we have succeeded in this effort, we know there are still stories not told, men not identified, and questions not answered. More reminiscences from the men, more muster rolls, more official and unofficial documents were needed. But completeness, like perfection, is elusive. We regret omissions and deficiencies and whatever disappointment they may cause for those searching for the name or actions of a particular man. For all that, we are grateful, even proud, that our memories and the few records we kept have survived as well as they have—well enough to produce, after half a century, this history of the First Armored Amphibian Battalion.

THE MARINES' HYMN

From the Halls of Montezuma
To the shores of Tripoli
We fight our country's battles
In the air, on land, and sea;
First to fight for right and freedom,
And to keep our honor clean.
We are proud to claim the title
Of United States Marine.

Our Flag's unfurled to every breeze
From dawn to setting sun;
We have fought in every clime and place
Where we could take a gun;
In the snow of far-off northern lands
And in sunny tropic scenes,
You will always find us on the job —
The United States Marines.

Here's health to you and to our Corps,
Which we are proud to serve;
In many a strife we've fought for life
And never lost our nerve;
If the Army and the Navy
Ever gaze on Heaven's scenes,
They will find the streets are guarded
By United States Marines.

CHAPTER

ONE

Background: The War, the Weapon, the Men

The First Armored Amphibian Battalion, a U.S. Marine Corps unit, existed and served in World War II in the years 1943-1945. This volume is an account of the operations of that battalion as told by the men who served in it.

THE WAR IN THE CENTRAL PACIFIC

To understand World War II, it is important, even necessary, to see it comprehensively, as one great global cataclysm that swept many nations into armed conflict and brought death, pain, and devastation to millions of people worldwide. The lives of most of us were changed by events in that war and by its social, economic, and political consequences afterward.

It would be a mistake, however, not to recognize that World War II was also a complex of distinct but interrelated wars fought in different geographic arenas, with different strategies and weapons, and with different combatants. The land wars of Europe had little in common with the naval war of the Pacific. And as adversaries the Germans, Italians, and Japanese were most unlike. Many volumes have recorded separately the wars in Eastern Europe, North Africa, Italy, France, the Atlantic, the China-Burma-India theater, the Pacific theater, and other arenas—all of them parts of World War II. Separate histories have also been written of these various wars as waged specifically by land armies, naval fleets, submarines, amphibious forces, air forces, and finally by the atom bomb. The focus of this book is on the operations of a single armored amphibian unit and its role in the Central Pacific war against the forces of Japan.

2 BACKGROUND

In mid-1943, a year and a half after Pearl Harbor, American and some Allied forces in the Pacific had already turned back the tide of Japanese conquest that in late 1941 and early 1942 had swept over vast areas from Burma to Guadalcanal and threatened Australia and New Zealand. American victories at Midway and in the Solomons had cost the Japanese more in naval and air resources than they could effectively replace. Australia and New Zealand were no longer threatened, and for the remainder of the war the initiative was with the Americans, not the Japanese. The American build-up in ships, planes, weapons, and men could not be matched by the Japanese, even though the Allies had given first priority to the defeat of Germany rather than Japan.

After intense debate between the Americans and the British, between Washington and commanders in the field, and between the Army and the Navy—especially between General Douglas MacArthur in the Southwest Pacific and Admiral Chester W. Nimitz in Hawaii—agreement was finally reached to wage a dual offensive. MacArthur would continue his campaign of shore leaps across northern New Guinea toward the Philippines. Nimitz could open an island-hopping offensive across the Central Pacific toward Japan itself. On July 20, 1943, the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued instructions to Nimitz that led in a few months to assaults on Japanese-held strongholds in the Gilbert and Marshall Islands.

THE JAPANESE FOE

Combat in all arenas of World War II was brutal and ravaging, but the Pacific War displayed a relentless quality unequaled elsewhere, and for that the greatest credit must be given to the Japanese soldier and the system that made him what he was. *Bushido*, the medieval Japanese code of the warrior, was very much alive in World War II, supporting a standard of conduct unlike any other. The Japanese were conditioned by teaching and discipline to believe that it was glorious to die for Emperor, family, and home, and especially glorious to take as many of the enemy with them as possible. It was better to die than become a prisoner, the ultimate disgrace, even if injured or unconscious when captured. The soldier's last bullet had to be saved for himself. The attitude of the Japanese soldier toward himself as a warrior, toward death, and toward his enemies made him a fierce and implacable foe. There was no equivalent in other arenas for *kamikaze* raids, *banzai* charges, or the high rate of individual suicide. It was common for defeated generals or other commanders to apologize to the Emperor for their failures and then commit ritual *hara-kiri*. The *Bushido* code was reinforced by propaganda convincing soldiers and civilians alike that prisoners could expect nothing but cruel atrocities from Americans. Marines witnessed tragic incidents of mass suicides, with women first killing their children, then themselves. The inevitable consequence of the Japanese soldier's code of conduct was the highest mortality rate and lowest capture rate for Japanese in battle than for any other nation.

Another consequence was the reaction of U.S. forces to an enemy determined to fight to the death, killing as many Americans as possible in the process. Experience soon

convinced most Americans that it was dangerous not to accommodate this determination. Before an enemy who would not surrender or cease to fight, the automatic response was get him first. In time there ceased to be any expectation of surrender, and extermination became routine. American intelligence personnel found it difficult to find enough prisoners for interrogation. It was a relentless war, with little mercy shown or expected.

THE WEAPON—AMTANKS

The war in the Pacific has been called variously an ocean war, a naval war, an amphibious war. The amphibious nature of the war was manifested by the formation of great fleets of American ships, and the troops and weapons they carried, all designated together as Amphibious Forces. It was amphibious assaults against one enemy-held island after another that moved the war ever closer to Japan. New types of landing ships—LSTs, LSDs, LSMs and others—made up the constantly growing amphibious fleet. And new types of landing craft and landing vehicles—LCVPs, LVTs, and DUKWs—were used more and more to put men and matériel onto hostile beaches.

When the U.S. entered World War II, knowledge and expertise in amphibious assault were to be found almost exclusively in the U.S. Marine Corps. Although the Corps had other functions, amphibious warfare had become its primary mission. Marine Corps doctrine for amphibious operations was well defined, and prototypes of tracked landing vehicles had been tested. Implementation in men and equipment, however, could be made only as the wartime growth in weapons production made it possible. The emergence of tracked amphibians for actual combat was very slow. Orders had been placed in 1941 for a small number of amphibian tractors (LVTs), and experiments had been made with amphibian tanks (LVTAs). A few LVT-1s were used at Tulagi in August 1942, and LVT-2s at Tarawa in November 1943, but LVTAs did not appear in combat until the Kwajalein invasion of January 1944.

AMPHIBIAN TRACTORS

Before amphibian tanks there were amphibian tractors. In pre-war days recruiting posters used to feature Marines wading ashore with rifles held at high port. That image faded in the Pacific War, where enemy-held islands were often ringed by rough coral reefs, hundreds of yards across, which prevented small boats from bringing troops in close to a beach. The best solution to the coral reef problem proved to be the Landing Vehicle, Tracked (LVT; also called amphibian tractors or amtracs). The Marine Corps strategists who had foreseen a possible war with Japan also saw the difficulties of landings made across coral reefs. When, therefore, Donald Roebling developed a tracked swamp buggy, or "alligator," for rescuing people in the Florida Everglades, the Marine Corp planners recognized its potential. By contract with the Corps, Roebling

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and the Food Machinery Corporation produced the tracked amphibian tractor known as the LVT-1. The envisioned purpose of amtracs was to load troops and supplies from ships or other craft, transport them across coral reefs, and deposit them to best advantage on hostile beaches. A later model, the LVT-2, sometimes called the Water Buffalo, was the amphibian tractor most often seen by First Armored men. There were also LVT-3s and LVT-4s produced later in the war.

AMPHIBIAN TANKS

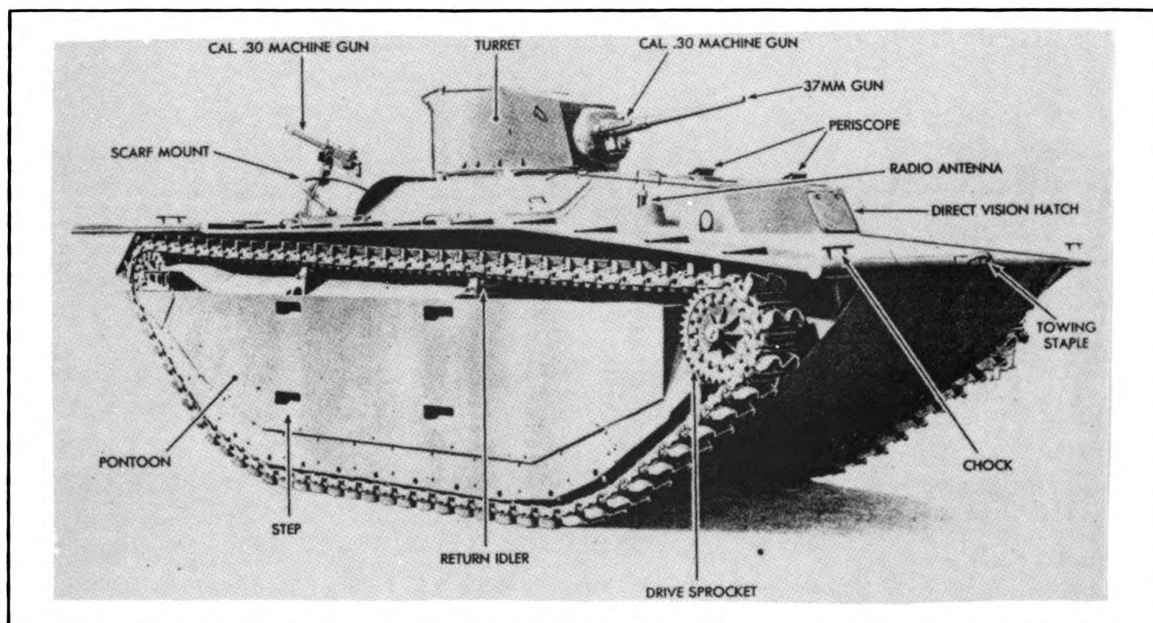
The First Armored Amphibian Battalion rode and fought in LVTAs, officially "Landing Vehicles, Tracked (Armored)," but widely called armored amphibians, amphibian tanks or amtanks. The LVTA had a turret mounted on an LVT hull, and more armor and more firepower than the amtracs (LVTs). The first LVTAs were developed from 1941 experimental swamp buggies with a 37mm gun mounted on them. The First Armored saw action successively with two models of amtanks, LVTA-1s for Kwajalein and Guam, LVTA-4s for Okinawa. The LVTA-1 carried a 37mm gun and four .30-caliber machine guns. The LVTA-4 was equipped with a 75mm howitzer, one .50-caliber machine gun, and one .30-caliber machine gun.

The primary mission of the LVTAs was beach assault. They were to lead the first infantry wave across the reef, firing at enemy targets until the infantry hit the beach. Since in that phase of the landing, naval and air bombardment had been lifted, the LVTAs provided the last firepower against hostile beaches before the troops were actually ashore. Secondary missions, after the initial beach assault, included beach defense and amphibious patrols. With the advent of the LVTA-4, with its 75mm howitzer, it became possible for the First Armored to function as artillery, a new mission conceived of and developed by Major Louis Metzger, the Battalion Commander. As artillery, each tank platoon was organized as a 75mm howitzer battery for indirect fire on enemy targets. The First Armored could thus field three artillery batteries from each line company, a total of twelve from the whole battalion.

THE LVTA-1

Our first vehicle, which carried us through the Kwajalein and Guam operations, was the LVTA-1, with its 37mm cannon and four machine guns. It was an all-steel monster, 26 ft. 1 in. long, 10 ft. 8 in. wide and, at the turret, 10 ft. 1 in. high. Including its weapons, but not its crew, it weighed about 16 tons. As armor, they had a half inch of steel on the sides of the cab and turret, a quarter inch elsewhere. They were designed for a crew of six but, in combat operations, a seventh man, whose regular duties would be in maintenance or other specialty, was assigned as ammunition passer.

The LVTA-1s were awkward beasts, dependent on their grouser-equipped tracks for traction on land and for propulsion at sea. Their speed may have been as high as



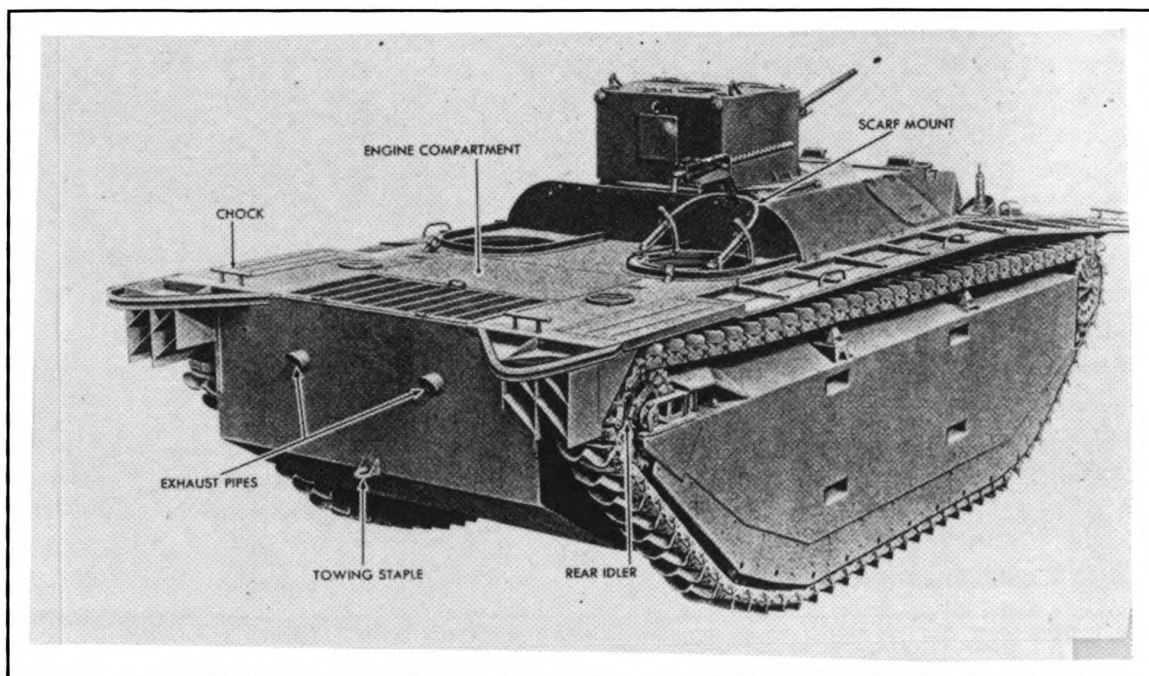
LVTA-1, front view, but this model, as shown, has no machine gun for the radio operator. (USMC)

20 to 25 miles per hour ashore and 5 to 7.5 miles per hour afloat, but actual speed was much affected by terrain or surf. Steering was accomplished by the difference in speed between the left and right tracks, braking by reversing the tracks. The following testimony describes the LVTA-1 in more detail, with comments on its capabilities and deficiencies.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

The First Armored Amphibian Battalion was the first of its kind, although the Army was developing amphibian tank battalions at Fort Ord using the same fighting vehicles. Basically the armored amphibian was a standard Landing Vehicle, Tracked (LVT), powered by a Continental aircraft gasoline engine. Superimposed on the hull was an M-3 light tank turret mounting a 37mm gun with a .30-caliber machine gun mounted coaxial. In addition, there were a .30-caliber machine gun mounted on a ball-and-socket in front of the radio operator and two .30-caliber machine guns on scarf mounts in cockpits behind the turret. Except for the turret there was no armor on the vehicle, which was built of 20-gauge steel. (Later tests would prove this thin metal could not stop a .30-caliber armor-piercing bullet.) The bilge pump operated off the engine, and the vehicle was quite unseaworthy. Its tracks were metal, and it was driven through the water by metal cleats. On land it rode on the same suspension system.

It was a poorly designed vehicle, slow on land, very slow and unmaneuverable in the water. The radios were not encased to protect them from the sea water that constantly poured in. The auxiliary generator was so located as to be subject to incoming sea water so that it could not operate. The engines were prone to chew up the



LVT-1, rear view. (USMC)

piston rings. (At my insistence the engine company replaced the piston rings in all the vehicles, using Marine mechanics, but paying them for their labor.)

DANIEL H. MAYNARD, Company A

LVTs were particularly effective in crossing coral reefs where ordinary landing craft would ground. Our LVTAs were not used for the transportation of troops, but were used to precede assault waves and to fire their cannons and machine guns during that crucial interval when naval and air bombardment had to cease to avoid interfering with the attacking assault troops. The tank carried a crew of seven: the driver, seated forward and to port; the radio operator, seated opposite; the port and starboard machine gunners, firing from open waist mounts aft of the turret; the 37mm gunner, located in the port side of the turret; and the tank commander, also in the turret and acting as loader and assistant gunner. The seventh man, whose job was in many ways the least desirable of all because of his total lack of vision, was the ammunition passer, who worked in the hull.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

The LVTAs floated because the vehicle's construction was such that the sides consisted of permanent, built-in pontoons. This was not apparent from looking at them, but there was space, more than a foot, between the outer and inner walls. This space

was divided into several, maybe five, compartments separated vertically the length of the vehicle.

The two .30-caliber machine guns behind the turret were placed, one each, on the port and starboard sides. The gunners for these two positions stood on low metal platforms and were out in the open from their lower ribs up.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

The LVTA-1s were a great improvement over the light tanks we had trained with at Jacques' Farm (See Chapter 2). At least the LVTAs had an intercom system so that we could understand the tank commander's wants, needs, or whatever.

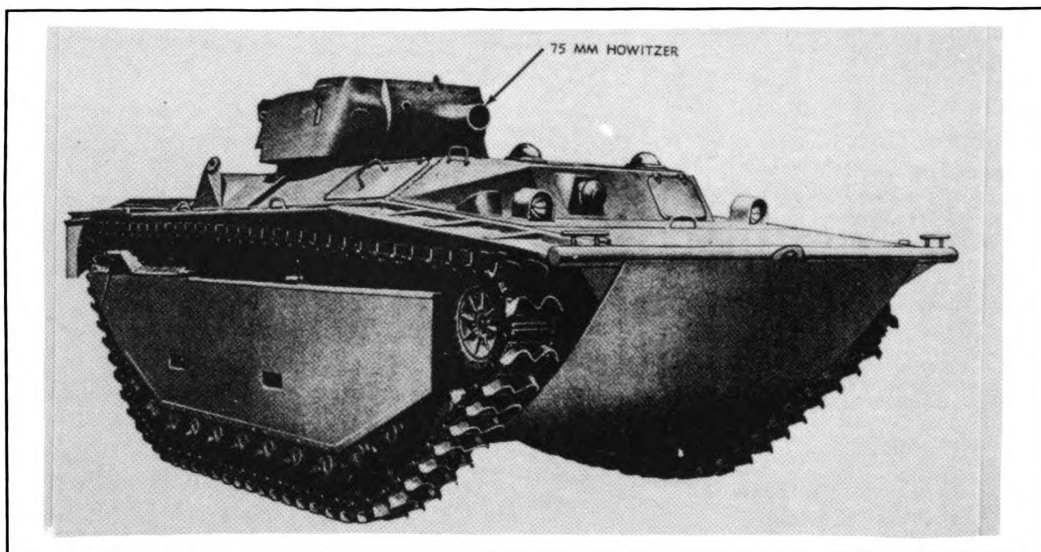
The LVTA-1 had quite a few shortcomings. For one thing the armor was quite thin. For another, when we went into the surf, the "waterproof" hatches weren't, and much seawater leaked in, especially around the periscope area. Cold seawater poured onto the hot transmission located between the driver and radioman, creating a saltwater steam bath atmosphere. The radio equipment (Navy type TCS HF) was not protected against the water, causing one heck of a mess. We learned early to use a poncho to protect the equipment, but this cut off the required ventilation, causing the equipment to heat up. The location of the antenna, forward on the starboard side, would suffer damage if the 37mm was pointed anywhere near it. I learned to carry several spare antennae. The carbon microphone would get wet and cease to operate. The solution to that was to go to the PX and buy up all the condoms in stock. The condom made a perfect waterproof shield. I remember one time aboard LSD-4 we went to the ship's store and bought out the stock of condoms. I think the ship's company thought, "What a bunch of nuts these gyrenes are; not a female in sight for at least 2000 miles."

Besides the machine guns and the cannon mounted on the LVTA-1, each crew member carried a model 1911(A) .45-caliber pistol, and there was a Thompson submachine gun and an M-1 rifle aboard the tank. I have heard it said that ton for ton we had more firepower than a battleship. I don't know if that is true or not, but it makes a good story. The mount, identical with the Stuart M3A1 and M3A3 light tank, was gyro stabilized, which contributed immensely to the accuracy of the 37mm. The power plant consisted of a 250-horsepower Continental radial engine which was said to be able to operate submerged for a full minute. There was also "Little Joe," the auxiliary power plant used to charge the LVT batteries without having to run the Continental. The Continental engine used aviation gasoline. A full load, 110 gallons, would last about eight hours.

THE LVTA-4

The LVTA-4s, which replaced the LVTA-1s, were delivered at our camp on Guadalcanal in November 1944, a few months before the Okinawa campaign. Except for armament and armor, they were much like the LVTA-1s. The turret, which was uncovered, carried a 75mm howitzer and a .50-caliber machine gun. As in the LVTA-1,

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LVTA-4. (USMC)

a .30-caliber machine gun was in the radio operator's position. There were no machine guns aft. As armor there was one inch of steel around the turret, a half inch on the cab sides, and a quarter inch elsewhere. Its overall dimensions were about the same as the LVTA-1, but it weighed 19 tons. With fewer machine guns, the crew, including the ammunition passer, was six men instead of seven. Riding in the cab were the driver and the radio operator, who was also a machine gunner. Three men were in the open turret—the 75mm howitzer gunner, the loader for the howitzer, and the tank commander, who also operated the .50-caliber machine gun. The ammunition passer worked down in the cargo area.

GEORGE F. ROBERTS, Company D

Our new LVTA-4 was 2½ tons heavier, with some real armor on it, and a real gun.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

Our old LVTA-1s with their inadequate 37mm guns were replaced with the newer LVTA-4s, an improved version. The hull, engine, and drive train were almost identical but, instead of an M-3 light tank turret, the new vehicles carried an M-7 assault gun mount, with the main weapon being a 75mm howitzer. This was the same weapon that, as a pack howitzer, had been organic to Marine artillery units. While the weapon was superior, the mount with heavier armor was uncovered on the top, and the frontal armor was so low that the heads of the crew were exposed to frontal enemy fire.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

Our new tank was the LVTA-4, with the same engine configuration as the LVTA-1 but with a 75mm howitzer replacing the 37mm cannon. The howitzer was the same as the gun mounted on the M18 Hellcat self-propelled gun. The radio equipment was SCR Army equipment covering the range of about 27 MHz.

THE MEN WHO CAME TO THE FIRST ARMORED

First Armored men, officers and enlisted, came from all parts of the country, from diverse backgrounds, and with different experience in the Marine Corps. There were career men—the old Marines—who had stories to tell of duty in Shanghai or "Gitmo." Some were Guadalcanal veterans, or had seen wartime duty in Samoa or New Caledonia. Many were regulars (USMC), but many more were reserves (USMCR), in for the duration plus six months. Some came fresh from boot camp, but most had been to special training centers. Most of us had volunteered after the Pearl Harbor attack and had chosen the Marine Corps over the Army or Navy. Some perhaps were at first drawn by the colorful reputation of the Corps, but all had collided with reality in boot camp or other training centers. After that came a deeper pride in the Corps and a growing identity with it. Although patriotism surged high in the war years, the more immediate loyalty of Marines was to the Corps and, closest of all, to each man's own outfit and to his fellow Marines. The First Armored was an amphibian tank battalion, but we rarely called ourselves tankers or amphibians. We identified ourselves as Marines.

DANIEL H. MAYNARD, Company A

I joined the Corps after high school in 1937. In '38 I was ordered to Guam, where I served sixteen months. I was then ordered to China to serve with the 4th Marines till late 1941. After Pearl Harbor I was sent to Cuba as a master sergeant with the 9th Defense Battalion. Then came California and the First Armored.

WILLIAM D. GERMAIN, Company A

I enlisted on July 6, 1942, went through boot camp at San Diego, and was then sent to Camp Elliott. There I joined the 2d Replacement Battalion, the first replacement battalion of the war to be sent from the U.S. west coast. After receiving only three weeks training, which was mostly hiking and some night training, we sailed from San Diego on the *Lurline*, a converted luxury liner. This was an experience in itself. We had a bad storm, and I think all the troops were seasick, as this was the first time aboard ship for us. In New Caledonia we transferred to a troop ship, the *Zelin*, and on our way to Guadalcanal stopped in New Zealand. We saw several ships coming into port there with holes, blown-off turrets, fire damage, and other signs of battle. Knowing that they came from where we were going didn't make us feel too good about it. We

left, arrived at Guadalcanal at dawn, and worked all day unloading supplies. Our ship was damaged in an air raid as at that time the Japs controlled the air. Other ships were damaged as well. We unloaded as many supplies as possible before the ships left.

Being replacements, we were divided up into groups and sent into the hills to join respective outfits we were assigned to. After spending about three months with the 1st Marine Division, we were relieved by the Army. We moved to Australia, setting up our camp in the Melbourne cricket grounds. We were more fortunate than some other units as we were right near town. I soon came down with malaria, and after several attacks in a very short time, was sent home.

Upon arriving in the U.S. I was sent to the Naval Hospital in San Diego and given a 30-day leave. Returning to the hospital, I was sent to duty at the Jacques' Farm tank school. There I trained on the machine gun and the 37mm. After schooling I was sent to the Boat Basin to join Company A of the First Armored.

BYRON G. SNEVA, Company C

In Fergus Falls, Minnesota, there were the old stories of Marines fighting on the shores of Tripoli and in the halls of Montezuma, but now there were stories of a buddy in battle on Guadalcanal, and it made me want to be one of them. In November 1942 I hitchhiked to Minneapolis and enlisted. So many had the same inclination that the recruiter told me to go home and stand by until called. The call came in January, and in February 1943 I was on an express troop train to San Diego. The making of a Marine began quickly in Platoon 143, and continued unmercifully, but I never "cried uncle". Through it all they were getting me ready and fit to be with the elite—a part of history in the making.

GEORGE LEGINO, Company B

I volunteered for the Marine Corps Reserve in 1943 at the age of seventeen years. While in boot camp at San Diego, my preference was to serve in the Marine paratroopers. This was disbanded, however, and three men from my Platoon 660 were assigned to the newly formed First Armored Amphibian Battalion.

WILLIAM F. COWGILL, Company B

In boot camp in August 1943, the majority of us in Platoon 703 put in for the Raiders as our first choice for duty, tanks second, and the infantry third. Most of us ended up in those floating tanks at Oceanside, California.

MAYER S. GOLDBERG, Company D

I attended boot camp and did my basic training at that hell hole of the east coast, Parris Island. As this little 5' 11", 145-pound Jewish boy pulled into Parris Island on a

cattle train, I knew immediately I should have listened to my mother. But I made it, and from there went to Camp Lejeune.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

Quite possibly a number of First Armored troops were in boot camp at San Diego the same time as I, but I am aware of only two. I distinctly recall a member of another boot camp platoon, Joe (Joseph C.) Baumbach. Once having seen him, who can forget that colossal Texan, that prototypical Marine, among the biggest Marines since 1776? Only later did I become aware of another boot camp contemporary, Jack (John C.) Ryan, who was in fact from my home town of Ely, Nevada.

THE SCHOOLS

As with any complex weapons system, the maintenance and operation of amphibian tanks required special skills not usually found in civilian life. Men destined for service in the First Armored went to various kinds of schools or training centers, where they learned tank driving, tank maintenance, radio, and other technical skills, plus amphibious combat, leadership, and other specialties. Training in the schools might go on for weeks or months, during which most of the students usually had no clear picture of what they were training for. Men who had operated farm equipment sometimes became tank drivers. Auto mechanics sometimes were assigned to tank maintenance. But many wondered what peculiar Marine Corps logic had placed them where they found themselves.

JOHN F. KELLY, Company D

I enlisted in the Corps on December 14, 1942 and did my boot camp training at the Marine Base, San Diego. Next I was sent to the Base Motor Transport School, where we ate out of china cups and saucers and had Base tailors and dry cleaners to fit our uniforms. That was heaven, but it didn't last long enough.

GEORGE F. ROBERTS, Company D

After boot camp in San Diego (September-October 1942) and approximately one year in the Marine Corps Base Fire Department, I went to the top sergeant and said I was tired of fighting the battle of San Diego. I wanted to go where the action was. By 0800 next day(!) I was drawing my 782 gear and en route to Camp Pendleton.

DONALD C. HOUSTON, Company B

After boot camp at Parris Island, I was given a ten-day leave with orders to report to Camp Lejeune Amphibian School. Of interest is the fact that the first combat casualty of the First Armored, Sergeant William T. McCartney, for whom our camp on

Guadalcanal was named, was in my class at Camp Lejeune. He was the ranking NCO in the class while, at 27 years of age, I was the "old man." Most were kids of 19 or 20. Following completion of that course, we were shortly ordered to California, eventually arriving at the Boat Basin.

ROBERT A. FISH, Company A

I received orders from Quantico, Virginia, to report to Camp Elliott. I attended a jungle warfare school there with about thirty other second lieutenants.

BYRON G. SNEVA, Company C

On April 10, 1943 I was transferred from the Recruit Depot to Camp Elliott and assigned to ammunition ordnance school.

RICHARD A. VOGEL, H&S Company

I went into the Marine Corps in late February 1943 and started boot camp in San Diego the first part of March. Sometime during boot camp we were shown a list of places we could choose from for advanced training. Being from Louisville, Kentucky, I chose Fort Knox for tank training and, true to Marine Corps logic, was sent to the Amphibian Tractor Maintenance School in Dunedin, Florida. That school was established to train mechanics in the maintenance of amphibian vehicles that the Marine Corps felt would be ideal for assaults on any type of beach. It was located at Dunedin because that was near the Florida home of the vehicle's inventor, Donald Roebling, so that he could be an advisor.

The school was made up of about 250 to 300 men, including permanent personnel. Each week a new class was formed to start a program of study to include the theory and practical work of the radial combustion engine, the ignition and electrical system, the power train, and the track system. The classes consisted of 15 to 16 men each. In one class a month, six second lieutenants would be a part of one of the classes.

After boot camp, Dunedin was like being on vacation. For most of the men there, that was their first time to see Florida. We were only six or eight miles from the beach at Clearwater and had liberty every other night and every other weekend. Really tough duty! The local citizens were very interested in making us feel at home. There was never any need to hitchhike on liberty. We could just walk to the road, and someone would stop and pick us up within minutes.

Upon graduation all the men were shipped out to various amphibian units in the Corps. At least five Dunedin men went to H&S Company in the First Armored. Norman J. Hogan, Floyd L. Parks, Sophus J. Peterson and I were from my class and Wendell E. Sherick from another class. There were other Dunedin graduates who went to other companies of the Battalion. All five of us except Parks stayed in the First

Armored until it returned to the States. Somewhere along the line he was transferred out of the Battalion.

MAYER S. GOLDBERG, Company D

At Camp Lejeune I took a communication test, and was then sent to radio school in Omaha, Nebraska. They put me and other Marine students up at the YMCA. That was the best duty I ever had, and it lasted thirteen weeks. They taught us how to build a simple radio. Some built it in a few days; it took me the whole thirteen weeks. They did teach me how to replace communication equipment that had gotten wet with salt water: Just put in a new piece. I got an A+ in that specialty. From Omaha I went to Camp Pendleton, where I joined the First Armored.

DALE L. BARKER, Company D

I enlisted on May 26, 1942 and did my boot training at Parris Island. One day in boot camp our whole platoon was marched somewhere to take a test in Morse code aptitude. Some of us who took that test were sent in July to a radio operator school run by RCA in New York City for the Navy. We were stationed at Pier 92 on the Hudson River at the end of 52d Street. The big liners, *Queen Mary* and *Queen Elizabeth*, came in alternately to Pier 90, right beside Pier 92, and we could watch them steadily loading troops for transport to England. The burned-out French liner, *Normandie*, lay on her side nearby at Pier 88. Four months of school in Morse code and other operating skills was not bad, and liberties in New York were fantastic.

Three Marines in that class were transferred to the Marine Barracks in New River, North Carolina, for a four weeks' radar course. We were then sent, in December 1942, to Radio Matériel School, Naval Research Laboratory, in Washington DC. That school lasted nine months and was tough, but the liberty couldn't be beat. In September 1943 I was given staff sergeant's stripes and a week's leave at home in Adairsville, Georgia, then sent through Camp Elliott and Camp Pendleton to the Boat Basin.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

From boot camp, I was assigned to the Communications School at the Base Signal Battalion, Marine Corps Base, San Diego. The school was widely acclaimed as "Dodge Tech" in honor of the commanding officer, Lt. Colonel Wilson T. Dodge. From that time forward I, along with my fellow radio operators, radio technicians, and telephone linemen bore the cryptic, and sometimes ignominious, label, *CP*. *CPs* were "Communications Personnel," an oddball collection of Marines who were something slightly different from "line" troops. Our long-suffering instructors at Radio School included Sergeants Kenneth D. Kirk and Leon B. "Mike" Michael and Corporal Robert L. "Bob" McBride.

Much of our time at Radio School was dedicated to training in receiving and sending Morse code. Although I can recall no more than one or two isolated instances when Morse was used by any First Armored radio operator, later in the war it did prove

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useful for the purpose of eavesdropping upon the Navy's visual light signals, which also employed the Morse dots and dashes. Our proficiency in flag semaphore, learned at radio School, also proved useful in the Pacific.

Without doubt Radio School was physically the most comfortable duty most of us experienced during WWII. We were quartered in the handsome permanent brick barracks at the north end of the parade ground at San Diego Marine Corps Base and were served meals there, on china, in a splendid mess hall. The contrast between this elegance and the rugged, spartan existence of boot camp was unbelievable. There were about fifty members of my Radio School class who became First Armored troops [See the table below].

RICHARD ZENGER, Company D

After boot camp I was immediately assigned to Radio School on the Marine Corps Base in San Diego. Our class started in January 1943 and finished in March. I first met several of the First Armored men in Radio School [See the table below]. One of these, Jack (John T.) Evans, was brilliant, having been an operator for the Union Pacific. And Joe (Joseph C.) Baumbach, who had to slouch down to get into the Marines, never fit a standard issue bunk and chose to accommodate himself on his bunk

FUTURE FIRST ARMORED MEN NAMED BY HILL, ZENGER AND PAPALIAS AS BEING IN THEIR RADIO CLASS

Dallas E. Barnhart	Max G. Harris	John C. Ryan
Joseph C. Baumbach	Leroy F. Hesse	Donald Scharf
George T. Bell	John T. Iles	Edward J. Schultz
Paul W. Bills	Charles E. Kirk	James A. Shiley
James E. Braunn	Thomas G. Komaroski	Harold I. Sommers
William E. Brummond	David P. MacPherson	Norman H. Spurlock
Wallace E. Burkett	Thomas P. Manson	Richard T. Story
Arthur M. Cochran	Joseph L. Meadows	Richard T. Swartz
Wilbur F. Cravey	Howard L. Mueller	Wallace A. Sweum
George D. Cree, Jr.	Russell C. Murphy	Russell D. Thomas
Robert Davis	Russel R. Nielsen	Lamar A. Thompson
Gale Ellis	Joseph B. O'Brien	Donald P. Thorn
George B. Engelmann	Thomas R. O'Meara	David S. Watkins
John T. Evans	Daniel J. Olsen	Donald C. Webster
John "Pat" Greene	Robert W. Pierce	Robert B. Wilson
Floyd Harris	Robert D. Pittman	Elvin E. Wisser

pad laid out on top of several locker boxes. I well remember the time when he awakened the barracks at 2:00 a.m., shouting clearly Texas oaths, from an upside down prone position of disadvantage in the vicinity of his makeshift bed. Someone(??) had replaced a couple of locker boxes with wire coat hangers!

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

At the conclusion of my boot training at the Marine Corps Base (MCRD), I attended radio school. A large number of my classmates in the CP battalion at the radio school would eventually become part of the First Armored [See the table, page 14]. I consider myself extremely fortunate to have been assigned to an organization and able to maintain a relationship with buddies which lasted three years.

JACQUES' FARM

Jacques' Farm deserves special attention. Of all the schools and training centers it is the one most vividly remembered by the greatest number of First Armored members. Even though isolated from other Marine Corps facilities, it was officially the Tank Training Center at Camp Elliott, California. Training there, where all the vehicles were land tanks, was not directed primarily toward amphibians. But it was the best the Marine Corps offered for training men who were to become the drivers, gunners, and other crewmen of our floating monsters. First Armored alumni of Jacques' Farm seem now to relish remembering and relating the rigors of their time there.



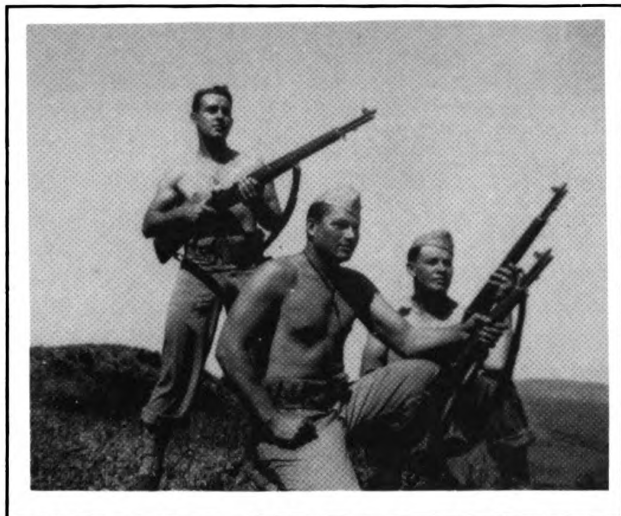
AT JACQUES' FARM, 1943. Standing: Earl M. Hill, Richard T. Swartz, George Papalias, David P. MacPherson. Front: Edward J. Schultz, Robert W. Pierce. (Pierce)

RICHARD ZENGER, Company D

Jacques' Farm was technically part of Camp Elliott. It was an olive grove in the El Cajon area and very undeveloped as a camp. Our tents were set among the olive trees and had no floors. The CO's office was in the old farm house, and the mess hall was in another farm building. It was hot and dusty and very hard to keep ourselves and our gear clean. We learned how to drive and maintain light tanks. We also had instruction on the 37mm gun, but I don't remember firing it there.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

One of our inspiring leaders at Jacques' Farm was a career regular Marine officer and hero of then-recent Pacific battles, Major Olin L. Beall. It was his function to put the fear of God into neophyte tankers and instill esprit de corps, and he did so by fiery oratory in which boisterous threats of "gut-shooting" his detractors played a prominent part. Just one unforgettable character among many in the Corps.



At Jacques' Farm, 1943. Donald Scharf, Rudy Ursig, and a man identified only as "Bean Bag." (Scharf)

Jacques' Farm was located at some remote and God-forsaken site on the eastern outskirts of San Diego. Amenities were non-existent and squalor was rampant. Combat conditions at Kwajalein, Guam, and Okinawa, and living conditions at Guadalcanal, were tolerable after a tour at Jacques' Farm. There we were introduced to the light (land) tank, whose basic mechanics and armament were similar to those of our future amphibian tanks. CPs, as well as other trainees, were schooled in all functions and operations of these "pig-iron bastards" (as Major Beall fondly referred to them). In the process of

becoming competent tank drivers, gunners and loaders, we daily became as filthy, greasy, dust-covered and unmilitary in appearance as any dedicated "tanker." These vehicles were grimy, greasy, brutal, and crude. Powered by air-cooled radial aircraft engines, equipped with primitive manual transmissions and steering systems, they were unbelievably noisy, cramped, hard-riding, and uncomfortable. Our future amphibians proved somewhat roomier, though not as maneuverable and much less heavily armored.

The one officer I distinctly recall having first met at Jacques' Farm, who thereafter became commander of Company B, in which I served, was Lieutenant (later Captain) Edgar Stuart Carlson. I do not recall which, if any, other First Armored officers came through Jacques' Farm, although I believe Lieutenant "Swampy" (Calvin E.) McClain was there when we were. A number of life-long friendships began there. In my recollection, that genial Californian, Bob (Robert W.) Pierce, was the catalyst and focal point of a lasting and close-knit group of young Marines. He repeatedly invited many of us to his parents' Los Angeles home on weekend liberty. Those occasions formed the basis for many happy memories later while we were in the Pacific, and even unto the present.

JOHN F. KELLY, Company D

We got orders to go for tank training at Jacques' Farm, a real hole under the best of circumstances. Our group arrived in a rain squall, and the camp was a sea of mud. Major Beall, the school commander, ordered all of us out of the trucks, sea bags and all, into the mud, while he stood on a wooden sidewalk in front of his office. His gruff voice implied that he meant what he said, and we had better listen up or else. He looked as though he could kick all our butts very easily and would probably enjoy doing so. I figured that being overseas couldn't be any worse than Jacques' Farm. We ate out of mess kits and learned in a hurry to eat everything we took because the GI can was being watched by the officer of the day. He would make you eat whatever was left on your tray.

LEO WHITLOCK, Company D

What a farm this was! We almost starved after coming from the good chow of boot camp. I remember the mess hall was in the dairy barn, and the PX was in the chicken house. Most of us lived on A.B.C. beer and semisweet cocoa bars, which we got at the PX.

ROBERT A. FISH, Company A

At Elliott an officer in charge asked, "Which one of you men can drive a tractor?" About twenty of us held up our hands. We were ordered to report to Jacques' Farm. At least 50 percent of the second lieutenants in the First Armored came from this class. During this period I met Marines I could never forget, but whose names I can't remember. A good number of the enlisted men had been on the Guadalcanal landing. On night maneuvers I talked to many of them and admired them greatly.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

Approximately in March 1943 I was transferred to Jacques' Farm to start my training as a member of a tank crew. We spent about three months at Jacques' Farm, a hot, dusty, miserable place without hot water or electricity and *with* outhouses. We had to go to the Army-Navy YMCA in San Diego for our clean liberty clothes and hot showers. Part of the routine training was a weekly night field exercise in the hills of Murphy's Canyon. It was extremely dark, and my fear was of stepping on a rattlesnake in the dark. This never happened, but I did manage to fall in some poison oak during one session and ended up with a good case of the stuff, putting me in the dispensary at Camp Elliott for 21 days. Boy, what a session!

MARKING TIME AT CAMP PENDLETON

Most of the graduates of the various schools and training centers—whether in radio, motor transport, ordnance, tanks, or whatever—had no clear idea of what their future held for them. Those who had studied amphibian tractor maintenance at Dun-

edin may have been the only ones who had even heard of tracked amphibian combat vehicles. The Marine Corps was not yet ready for these men. No LVTA-1s had been delivered, and the First Armored had not at that time been ordered into existence. Between school and a real assignment, many men were held in limbo at Camp Pendleton, some for weeks, some for months, depending on when they arrived from school or other duty elsewhere. To save them from the tedium of long-term idleness, they were put through various combat training exercises—sometimes more than once—or assigned to mess duty or other such diversions. A few fortunate ones actually found themselves involved in movie making for Hollywood.

The cadre from Jacques' Farm may have constituted the beginnings organizationally of what became the First Armored. The chronology is uncertain but, probably in early July 1943, some of the men were assigned temporarily to a 2d Amphibian Tractor Company. By mid-July working parties were going down to the Boat Basin to begin construction on their future camp. The actual transfer from up in Pendleton to the Boat Basin, by a relatively small body of future tankers, followed soon after. The amphibian tanks still had not come.

ROBERT W. PIERCE, Company A

From Jacques' Farm we were transferred to Camp Pendleton, Oceanside. We completed a combat conditioning course and were in a standby status awaiting formation of the First Armored Amphibian Battalion. It was incumbent on our superiors to keep us occupied with work details, trivial or otherwise, to maintain good morale.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

It turned out that our group at Jacques' farm had been training for a new weapon system, amphibian tanks ("amtanks") being manufactured by a defense contractor with the unlikely name of Food Machinery Company (FMC). But we completed that training before FMC could deliver the first of the amtanks to the west coast. It turned out that my group moved from Jacques' Farm to Camp Pendleton where, for lack of other distractions, we were twice put through a "combat conditioning course," compared to which the physical rigors and ordeals of boot camp and Quantico paled. The calisthenics, swimming, diving—and martial arts taught by the likes of Lieutenant Colonels Evans F. Carlson and Anthony J. Drexel Biddle—were daily fare for all hands while awaiting the arrival of FMC's tardy amtanks. Never before or since have I been in better physical condition.

THOMAS T. OYLER, Company C

Before the Boat Basin, a cadre under the command of 1st Lieutenant James A. C. Patrick was quartered about thirteen miles inland from the front gate of Camp Pendleton. For much of this time the enlisted men made movies, the first being *Guadal-*

canal Diary, filmed at Camp Pendleton. The second, filmed in Hollywood, was *Gung Ho*. During this period most of the small officers group went through the combat conditioning course three times.

RICHARD ZENGER, Company D

In three weeks of "combat conditioning" at Camp Pendleton, we double-timed between various kinds of physical punishment and ate ravenously. The punishment included calisthenics, tumbling with packs and weapons, hand-to-hand combat with clubs etc., crawling under barbed wire under live fire, and combat swimming. The latter included jumping fully clothed from a 30-foot tower into a swimming pool full of cork floats. This was to simulate evacuating a ship in a combat situation. The gunnery sergeant in charge of the pool would sit on the bleachers under the tower and, as each rank of three Marines came up to the edge of the tower, he'd say, "Step off." Well, one guy in our outfit balked on the first try and never could get up the nerve to step off after that. The gunny made it clear that stepping off was the only way to get off the tower and that he was prepared to wait until the Marine jumped. Later that evening, as we were returning from chow, we could still see the Marine on the tower, silhouetted against the evening sky, and the gunny on the bleachers reading a book. I was recounting this story at one of our reunions, and George W. Tremblay told us that he was the Marine!

BYRON G. SNEVA, Company C

I was transferred on June 17 from ordnance school to Camp Pendleton and assigned to thirty days of mess duty. It lasted only about ten days, however, and I was assigned to the 2d Amphibian Tractor Company and moved to Pendleton Area 14. This was a lot closer to the PX, but still a mile from the mess hall. On July 19 we were given permanent platoon and squad assignments and told that the next day we would start building our camp at the Boat Basin. At the end of July I spent a 72-hour pass in Long Beach, Los Angeles, the Hollywood USO, the Palladium, and the NBC and CBS studios. Somebody stole my overseas cap, and I had to buy a new one, for \$3.08.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

At Camp Pendleton I reported to First Sergeant William G. Buttery, who immediately had me report to Tech Sergeant Edward A. Trosper for mess duty, the best duty I can remember having as a PFC in the USMC. My day started at 0600 and ended at 1200 hours. The duty consisted of collecting the garbage cans, taking them to the garbage room, a large screened affair, dumping the cans, and steam cleaning them. After the garbage was collected, at about 1130, I steam-cleaned the room. Then, believe it or not, I had liberty from 1200 to 0600 hours the following day.

With this schedule while at Pendleton I sometimes had liberty from 1200 Friday to 0600 Monday. I took advantage of a long weekend to hitchhike to Lodi, a distance of about 480 miles, to visit my parents. It was hardly any trouble for a serviceman to hitch a ride during WWII, but it took about 18 hours each way for the trip. This comes to a speed of about 27 miles an hour. I got to visit at home for about 30 hours. It was worth it. Luckily I was never stopped by MPs as I had no authorization to leave the 11th Naval District and go into the 12th Naval District. Before leaving for overseas I made the trip three times. My brother, Thike, who was stationed at El Toro, got caught once and received five days bread & water.

MOVIE MAKING FOR HOLLYWOOD

Not all at Pendleton was hardship and drudgery. As already indicated, some future First Armored men were tapped to perform in the making of two movies, mostly at Camp Pendleton. Again, the order of events is uncertain, but it seems that *Guadalcanal Diary* was filmed first, then *Gung Ho*. In part *Gung Ho* was made in Hollywood, probably after the transfer, but before the Battalion was activated.

ROBERT B. WILSON, Company D

At Pendleton we had been given all the different types of training the Corps could think of, and it was apparently going to be another two or three months before our tanks would finally arrive. So to occupy our time, we were given the job of helping make the picture, *Guadalcanal Diary*. This was interesting, especially being around all the stars that were in the cast: William Bendix, Anthony Quinn, Lloyd Nolan, etc. One day we would be Marines, and then the next day we might be made up as Japs or Army. Linda Darnell was married to the sound director for the picture (I don't know why, for he was at least twice her age), and she would drive down from L.A. a couple of times a week to visit. Our guys made sure she was well entertained. One day Bob Davis (later lost in the Marshalls assault) and I were picked to do a close-up where we were to attack a cave with the camera shooting from inside. We apparently weren't any John Waynes, because this scene ended up on the cutting room floor. Also, thirty of our people went to Hollywood to work in the *Gung Ho* picture, but Pat (John P.) Greene is the only one I can remember who got that detail.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

Somewhere along the line at Camp Pendleton my organization, a casual company, was earmarked to participate in the making of the movie, *Guadalcanal Diary*. Making it was great fun. Perhaps I have seen the movie a dozen times without ever seeing myself in it. This is probably because I was dressed as a Japanese soldier in full uniform, complete with an old '98 rifle. I was in a group of a large number of

of men making a dash across a river, probably the Tenaru (but in Camp Pendleton). In another scene I could again not see myself. That was the scene at the end of the movie where the Army was relieving the Corps. On completion of the movie, the movie studio threw a beer bust and donated a combination record player-radio for the recreation building at the Boat Basin. The movie was shown at Pendleton, and some of the dignitaries attended, including Lloyd Nolan, the star of the movie.

After we moved to the Boat Basin, we were again called on to help Hollywood out. This time it was the movie, *Gung Ho*, with Randolph Scott, J. Carroll Naish, and Alan Curtis. I never did see Randolph Scott, but did see J. Carroll Naish, and had a conversation with Alan Curtis. I never saw myself in the movie, though; maybe I was never meant to be a movie star.

RICHARD ZENGER, Company D

A typical set for a combat scene was a field where technicians had planted small charges, which were outlined on the ground with lime. They would film us as we charged through the area with the charges bursting all around us. They also used stunt men who would take nose dives off cliff faces when they were "shot." They fell harmlessly into a pit, three or four feet deep, which had been filled with empty cardboard boxes. For the beach landings, we came storming ashore from landing boats as the cameras ground away. Linda Darnell was a frequent visitor to the set since her husband was the photographer. The movie's stars, Anthony Quinn and William Bendix, played gin rummy when they had nothing else to do. They were very friendly with the Marines. Joe Baumbach and several other Marines spent several weeks at the studio in Hollywood helping to complete *Gung Ho*.

BEAUFORD A. GALIEN, Company C

After six months of training at Camp Pendleton, thirty Marines, including me, were picked to go to Hollywood to provide background for the movie, *Gung Ho*. Randolph Scott was the star, with Noah Beery, Jr. That was some duty! We stayed in the Plaza Hotel at Hollywood and Vine. We were picked up every morning to go to Universal Studio and were treated like royalty. But all good things have to end, and back we went to the Boat Basin.

CHAPTER TWO

The Boat Basin

The Boat Basin at Oceanside, California, was a logical site for Marine Corps amphibious training. Officially a part of the huge Marine base, Camp Pendleton, it was next to, and gave ready access to, the Pacific Ocean. It was at the Boat Basin that in the last five months of 1943 the First Armored was activated and did its training for operation overseas.

Some future First Armored Marines had for a few weeks been going down from Pendleton to work on building a tent camp at the Boat Basin, but it was probably late in July before a cadre of less than 200 officers and men occupied the camp permanently. The Battalion had not yet been activated. Still without any defined focus or direction, the men continued to mark time, improving and maintaining the camp and doing irrelevant training exercises. In many ways it was a period of expectation, uncertain purpose, and relaxed discipline.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

The Boat Basin was an adjunct of Camp Pendleton, situated on the ocean beach and developed initially for training with conventional landing craft. The group from Jacques' Farm, having completed light (land) tank training there, and having weathered the combat conditioning and Hollywood ordeals at Camp Pendleton, was among the first, if not the first, to form the nucleus of First Armored.

RICHARD ZENGER, Company D

When I arrived at the Boat Basin in mid-1943 there was only a freshly graded area with some sort of building used as a mess hall, and some toilet/shower buildings. Our first job was to erect pyramidal tents in which to live. The tent rows were back to back,

facing on streets which ended at the toilet/shower buildings along the east side of the property. Soon thereafter we built wooden decks and sides to go under the tents. I believe that eventually we had one electric light bulb in each tent.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

When we transferred to the Boat Basin, it was a tent city with not too many people around. We didn't have any equipment, and our group, the nucleus of the battalion to come, spent the days doing routine training and field exercises. It was about this time that some of us worked on the movie, *Gung Ho*.

BUILDING A BATTALION

The First Armored Amphibian Battalion was activated on 20 August 1943, Major Louis Metzger, commanding. The climate at the Boat Basin was never the same after that. The men now had an organizational identity even if they still knew little about what it meant to be in an armored amphibian outfit. The new battalion commander moved vigorously to bring the Battalion up to full strength in men and equipment. He addressed himself with equal vigor to problems of the morale, discipline, performance, and living conditions of the men already present at the Boat Basin. On September 6 the Major initiated a schedule for basic training, and on October 18 for advanced training. The goal in those few fall months was to build the First Armored into a combat-ready Marine Corps battalion.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

One day in August while I was walking guard duty near the quartermaster area of the Boat Basin, a young officer with shiny major's leaves on his collar walked up to me. We talked for a few minutes, and then he was on his way. It was later I learned he was the CO, Major Louis Metzger. I still had not heard the name, First Armored.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

I was among those present when Major Louis Metzger first addressed his new command between the tent rows at the Boat Basin.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

On 20 August 1943 I took command of the First Armored Amphibian Battalion. I was 26 years old, had four years in the Marine Corps and, although a major, my permanent rank was second lieutenant.

The so-called battalion was a cadre of some 125 officers and men, living in a dusty tent camp, with low morale, under the command of a reserve first lieutenant. While awaiting formation of the battalion they had been taken through physical conditioning

training some two or three times. To make matters worse, on the day I reported in, a young Marine had drowned in the surf. There was no equipment, transportation, or supplies. Except for the Battalion supply officer, a former quartermaster sergeant, none of the officers or non-commissioned officers had much experience. I was allowed to select three second lieutenants for the Battalion, who became the personnel, intelligence, and operations officers.

We rejoined the Marine Corps. Tight discipline and military courtesy were instituted. The camp was cleaned up, additional blankets were issued against the prevailing damp and cold, the mess was inspected every meal so that the food improved. Lacking vehicles, we trained in infantry tactics. Officers and Marines started arriving, some from schools, some from basic training. In error the Amphibious Corps adjutant sent twice the required number of men, and was outraged when the commanding officer interviewed the entire draft, selected the required number—about half the draft—and returned the remainder. Every opportunity was seized to send men to specialist schools so that we had the required skills to function as the complex unit we were.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

More men started to show up, a large number of them from training in Dunedin, Florida. Also J. R. Wallace showed up, a vet of the 6th Defense Battalion on Midway Island. J. R. was a CP and did have some stories to tell about his duty on Midway and the critical campaign for that island. Staff Sergeant Dale L. Barker, communications chief for D Company, joined the First Armored. More people showed up as time went by. I was fortunate because most of my radio school class buddies were already with me. I don't remember when Staff Sergeant René Bolduc came aboard, but I do remember that, while he was doing his thing with the LVTs, he would usually be singing "I'm Going to Buy a Paper Doll."

WILLIAM D. GERMAIN, Company A

At my first company formation at the Boat Basin, I saw our company commander and asked if that was Lieutenant Lillie. The reply was no, that's Captain (Owen P.) Lillie. That was a coincidence, as he had been the Replacement Battalion commander who had sent me overseas the first time. Now he was my company commander and took me overseas the second time.

J. R. WALLACE, Company D

There were six of us who were in the First Armored for only about eight weeks, from 21 August to 18 October 1943. We were all NCOs, radar men, and recently returned from the Pacific. We all wanted radar duty, and were transferred over our protest from the signal battalion at Pendleton into the First Armored. On our first day we began working for a transfer, but Major Metzger had other ideas. He thought that with our background we would make good mechanics for maintaining amtank radios.

We did the best we could while in the Battalion to keep the radios operating. More than once I set a radio on a bench and poured a bucket of fresh water over it to wash out the salt. Then, after baking it for 24 hours, I proceeded to troubleshoot it. The Major was unhappy when our transfer came through. He told us he had tried to stop it, but it was "just too big." Soon after, we were on our way to Camp LeJeune, North Carolina.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

It was a large battalion, [over eight hundred] officers and men. Later a Navy E9A unit of one officer and 25 men was attached to it to assist in the maintenance. In addition to the Battalion headquarters there were four line companies, each with eighteen armored amphibians. With the three LVTAs in the headquarters company, there was a total of 75 in the Battalion. In addition we were authorized twelve LVT(2)s (cargo carriers) as logistic support vehicles. As we performed all maintenance short of depot overhaul, the Battalion was authorized five each of machine shops, steam generators, lubrication trailers, and spare-parts trailers; 24 2½-ton trucks; plus a lot of radios and regular ¼-ton trucks (jeeps). Our authorized spare parts would fill two railroad boxcars. The Tables of Organization and Equipment were based upon land tank organization, making it difficult to get amphibian-peculiar equipment such as boat hooks and life jackets.

Unfortunately there was no doctrine on the Battalion's employment, no tactics for its use, and no knowledge of its capabilities and limitations. Few, if any, Marines had seen the vehicles. All of this would come to haunt us later on. Since there were four line companies, one could draw the conclusion that the intent of Headquarters Marine Corps was for one armored amphibian battalion to be the assault wave for two of the infantry regiments of a Marine Division, each using two assault infantry battalions.

FIRST ARMORED AMPHIBIAN BATTALION ORGANIZATION

Headquarters & Service (H&S) Company

Battalion Cmdr. Exec Off. Sgt Major. HQ staff. Personnel for Operations, Training, Intelligence, Ordnance, Communications, Maintenance, Logistics, Motor Transport, Supply, Mess, Medical (Navy), & other specialties.

H&S Company Cmdg Off. Exec Off. 1st Sgt. Staff. Crews for 3 LVTAs. Others.

Four Line Companies—A, B, C, D—each one as follows:

Company Cmdg Off. Exec Off. 1st Sgt. Staff. Personnel for Ordnance, Communications, Maintenance, etc. 3 Platoons, each with a Plat Leader, Platoon Sgt, & 5 squads (= LVTA crews) of 6 men each. HQ section of 3 LVTA crews.

RICHARD A. VOGEL, H&S Company

When I got to H&S Company at the Boat Basin, I soon found there were men specialized in many fields of expertise necessary to keep the Battalion functioning in and out of combat. Besides the commanding officer, executive officer, sergeant major and all their staff, we had the H&S Company commander, first sergeant, and staff, and an officer for each of the various units within the company. There were cooks and bakers, quartermaster personnel, ordnance experts, radio operators and repairmen, motor transport drivers and mechanics, three field music personnel, a medical doctor, a dentist, hospital corpsmen, a chaplain, and the amphibian tank and tractor mechanics. At Okinawa we even had a unit of Seabees in the company. There were also all the amtank crews, and many more specialists that I have probably forgotten.

H&S Company had three tanks, one each for the battalion commander, the battalion executive officer, and the company commander. The rest of the company vehicles were amtracs, used to carry ammo, medical supplies, etc.

ROBERT A. FISH, Company A

From Pendleton I was transferred to the Boat Basin and got a firsthand look at the LVTA-1. I was assigned to Company A, with Captain Owen P. Lillie as commanding officer, Lieutenant Thomas Joseph Garfield as executive officer, and Lieutenants "Doc" (Ellis N.) Livingston and Wiley W. Loughmiller and myself as platoon leaders.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

It was about this time we were divided up into tank crews, with the following men on LVTA D-11: Larry (Lawrence E.) Murray, Oklahoma City, tank commander/driver; Larry (Lawrence C.) Dhom, Newton IL, 37mm gunner; George Papalias, Lodi CA, assistant driver/radioman; Bobby (Robert A.) Charton, Morrilton AR, ammunition handler. Charton being the only married man in the crew, we named the tank "Dinky" using his wife's nickname. The LVTA-1 had two additional positions, machine gunners, in the rear, but I do not remember who filled those spots. John Iles was bunking in our tent, but I doubt he was a member of the D-11 crew as he was also a radioman. Lieutenant Milton B. "Sleepy" Curtis was our platoon leader and occupied the position of tank commander on D-11. This put Larry Murray in the left hand seat as driver.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

The unit was blessed with the finest of Marines, with many from the east coast of the United States, from all ethnic backgrounds. The officers also turned out to be top-notch. As several opportunities arose that allowed the transfer out of the Battalion of both officers and men who did not fit, the best were retained.

TRAINING IN THE AMTANKS

The future of the Battalion was suddenly much clearer when amphibian tanks finally appeared at the Boat Basin and the men could actually see them and operate them. They soon discovered what balky beasts they were fated to work with, and how much attention and understanding the beasts required from humans before they would even approximate the performance promised by the designers. Men were assigned to tanks and to the various positions in the tank—driver, radio operator, gunner—for which they had been trained. Operations soon escalated from mere learning how to function in an armored amphibian to more realistic combat maneuvers. On December 14 and 15 the Battalion operated with the 4th Marine Division in landing exercises on beaches at Camp Pendleton's Aliso Canyon. Training was intense for, though most of us did not realize it, time was very short.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

FMC delivered the amtanks, and specific vehicles were assigned to companies and their subordinate platoons. Each platoon consisted of five amtanks, and the tank crews were loosely organized as squads. A crew consisted of the tank commander, the 37mm turret gunner, the driver, the radio operator/bow .30-caliber gunner, and two rear .30-caliber gunners. Three additional tanks were assigned to company headquarters.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

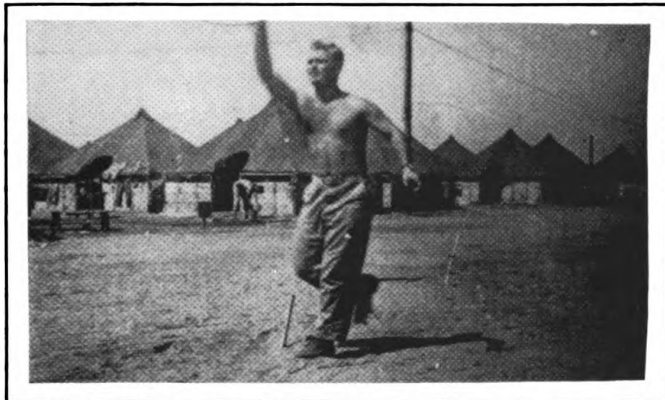
Ten LVTAs arrived, and intensive training in both land and water operations commenced. We found that even in light surf the vehicles tended to porpoise, diving as the wave hit the square stern. The only solution was to push the gas pedal to the "deck," getting the tracks to maximum speed with the hope they would "walk" along the bottom to keep the vehicle from turning over. We also found that when the bilge pump stopped, the vehicle had the flotation of a brick. Although several vehicles were sunk in the surf, we had no casualties from this training. The training policy was that every man in the vehicle could perform all the functions required, not just his assigned position.



At the Boat Basin. Standing: James A. Shiley, Norman H. Spurlock.
Front: John T. Iles, Robert B. Wilson, Richard Zenger. (Zenger)

ROBERT W. PIERCE, Company A

We saw that amphibian tanks were going to be a lot less maneuverable and fleet than the light tanks upon which we had our preliminary training. The driver and assistant driver stations on the tank were up front, and we were not at all impressed with the amount of armor on the bow and belly of the vehicle. The metal was about a quarter of an inch thick, and it was questionable whether it could resist pistol or rifle fire, much less the artillery fire we supposed would be shot at us. Sometime later we added



At the Boat Basin. Harold I. Somers pitching horse shoes. (Zenger)

another quarter inch of plating to the forward underside of the tanks.

Our training continued. Tank commanders were selected, 37mm gunners and 30-caliber machine gunners were assigned to tank crews, and CPs (radio operators/assistant drivers) practiced code and radio procedure. Tank drivers drove the vehicles on the Oceanside beaches, and there were a number of times that tanks became waterlogged in the heavy surf. In a very short

time our training resulted in our being pretty good amphib operators.

WILLIAM D. GERMAIN, Company A

On joining my tank crew, we started to get acquainted and used to working together. For one thing, we all learned to drive, to double-clutch those things, and to shift fast enough to keep them from stalling coming in and out of the surf. This was very important, as a stalled tank would either get swamped or become a standing target in combat. We practiced all kinds of driving formations.

ROBERT L. CONRAD, Company B

We were given our brand-new amphibian monsters. They were twice the size of our training tanks at Jacques' Farm and, to enhance the scene, we were operating them on the beach—nice *soft* sand. The first time I drove that big blue beauty into the surf, I knew it wouldn't sink because of the pontoons, but it seemed so heavy. There was no El Niño *that year*, because it felt more like Lake Superior in the fall.

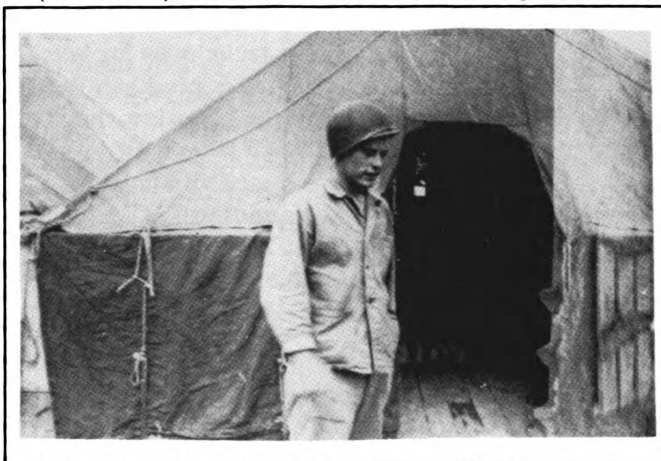
ROBERT A. FISH, Company A

Training began in earnest at this time. We maneuvered up and down Aliso Canyon and made practice landings on the beaches north of the Boat Basin. This was quite dangerous because of the heavy surf. We also practiced loading and unloading from LSTs, a very difficult thing to do.

DONALD L. FERCHAU, Company A

At the Boat Basin I was assigned to Tank A-17 in the 1st Platoon of Company A. The crew consisted of Larry E. Merritt, tank commander, from Ocoee FL; "Bunky" (Harvard V.) Miller, driver; "Whitey" (Thomas I.) Coleman, CP; Willy (William D.) Germain, 37mm gunner, from Flint MI; Bob (Robert E.) Carroll, .30-caliber machine gunner, from Minnesota; and "Frenchy" (Donald L.) Ferchau, .30-caliber machine gunner, from Gage OK. I don't remember who the ammunition passer was.

Life was mostly training in and out of the ocean, up and down the beach. It was all in a day's work to march, roll with the sea in our floating coffins, do combat swimming, fire and clean weapons, clean our clothes, and clean ourselves.



At the Boat Basin. James A. Shiley. Note the bare lightbulb. (Zenger)

BYRON G. SNEVA, Company C

We soon began intensive tank training, and I realized then that the tanks needed more power than the 7-cylinder Continental engine could deliver. I decided the next ones would have to have the 9-cylinder Pratt & Whitney engine. In the next several weeks we had practice and schooling in driving, gunnery, and night problems. Then in the third week of October we held maneuvers off San Clemente Island.

AMTANKS AND THE LST

The Navy had more LSTs (Landing Ships, Tank) than any other type of landing ship, and they were the most common conveyance overseas for the First Armored's men, tanks, and equipment. There were several versions of the LST, but all were big, flat-bottomed, shallow-draft, and over 320 feet long. They were also slow, not usually exceeding ten knots. Their hold was fitted as a huge tank deck, to which our amtanks had access from the sea by mounting a ramp and entering through two open bow doors. Although the LST was designed for unloading men and equipment directly onto a beach, coral reefs such as we encountered made that impossible. In all our landings we were dropped several thousand yards offshore and made it, on our own, through the waves and across the reef to the beach. Because of their size and slow speed, many sailors and Marines were sure that the designation LST really stood for Large, Slow Target. The officers and crewmen of LSTs, many not long in the Navy, and not long at sea either,

were often as little accustomed to their strange new type of ship as we were. After we had been overseas less than a year, we frequently found that we had more time afloat than our LST Navy hosts.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

Soon a Navy amphibious unit with the newly developed and built LSTs arrived. We spent many days developing techniques for launching and recovering the LVTAs at sea. The Navy officers were inexperienced and the crews less than well trained. There was no doctrine, and we found the Navy less than cooperative. For example, the ships would refuel only LVTAs launched from their ship. As a result some vehicles sank when their bilge pumps stopped for lack of fuel. At this time we had been issued our allowance of LVTs, both the armored LVTAs and the cargo LVT(2)s. The vehicles were at the Naval Station, San Diego, and required a lot of work to get into acceptable condition. It was a disappointment to find that our motor transport was the supposedly reconditioned vehicles the 4th Marine Division had trained with.

DONALD L. FERCHAU, Company A

The hardest test of all was boarding LSTs. You had to catch the rope, tie it off, wait till the tank rolled center to the LST ramp, and then hold on for dear life as you were propelled up to a safe place inside the belly of the LST.

WILLIAM D. GERMAIN, Company A

Learning to put tanks on LSTs was something. Even the crews on LSTs didn't know what to do. But we learned. The crewmen threw us lines and pulled the tanks back in line with the ramps. When ready, the drivers had to back up the ramps without turning. When we got to the top of the ramp, we would tilt right up, almost throwing us off the tank. We were lucky we didn't kill each other just getting them aboard. Then, leaving was a thrill, going down the ramps with all the brakes you could get, hoping that you didn't keep going down like a sub.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

Came the day when U.S. Navy LSTs appeared off the Boat Basin, and we learned the techniques of maneuvering the unwieldy amtanks in water, so as to bring them aboard the ships. The tanks' water propulsion was entirely by the tracks which propelled them ashore; the only means of steering was differential power/speed between the right and left track drive sprockets. What little braking was available consisted of reversing the direction of movement of the tracks. Approach to the bow ramp of the LST was a harrowing experience—both to the First Armored tankers and the ship's crew. If the tank could painfully be brought within range of a heaving line, the line would be attached to the tank's rear mooring cleats, and sailors would drag the tank backward until its tracks came into contact with the LST's bow ramp. (We eventually learned to center the

vehicle against the ramp by crossing the two heaving lines while dragging the tank in.) Then, with a mighty roar, slipping of clutch, and scattering of line handlers, the amtank would perilously back up the narrow ramp, into the LST's tank deck, and take its place in one of the two columns of amtanks being loaded.

OTHER TRAINING AT THE BOAT BASIN

As new recruits arrived in the Battalion, or as those already aboard were given new assignments, they were assigned to special training other than in tanks. Some training seemed to be across the board. Most, if not all, had to go up into Camp Pendleton early on cold mornings to learn combat swimming. The purpose of that was to improve our chances of survival if ever we had to abandon ship. Many worked to sharpen skills in which they had already had some previous training.

DONALD L. FERCHAU, *Company A*

Once I was ordered over to headquarters for rocket school, where I learned about rockets, those great pieces of destruction we later saw as the odd-shaped missiles stacked in port and starboard racks on LCIs. At training's end I instructed the Company about these and their future use and possible deployment in our battalion as rocket tanks. That was probably a damned fool idea, for we never heard any more about it.

BYRON G. SNEVA, *Company C*

There was other training too: a demolition exercise, where we practiced setting up charges on trees, rocks, and under water; combat swimming, where we had to jump off a 30-foot tower; firing practice with .30- and .50-caliber machine guns, pistols, carbines, and rockets; and classes in map reading, semaphore, and aircraft recognition.

EARL M. HILL, *Company B*

Some of us underwent some advanced electronic training at the Boat Basin, and I evolved from a radio operator to a radio technician. At this time some of us also received training in cryptography and other aspects of communications-related intelligence. I took advantage of opportunities to learn the jobs of all amtank crew positions in order to fill in, in case of need.

MAYER S. GOLDBERG, *Company D*

At the Boat Basin I recall learning Morse code along with flag signals. To my surprise, I became a very adept student at these, though I never had the opportunity to use either. Voice was so much easier. Living conditions were excellent if you compared them to what was coming in the months and years ahead.

RICHARD ZENGER, Company D

The CPs started to work together on equipment and communications procedures. Initially the radios we had to work with were in jeeps. I recall taking a two- or three-day trip with Dale L. Barker and (I believe) Jack (John T.) Evans inland to Indio, California, to test the operating and range characteristics of our radios. It was pretty heady being off on our own for a few days.

CAMP LIFE AND LIBERTY

Living on a beach in California may sound idyllic, but it's a little less than that if you live in a tent and the weather is wet and cold. For First Armored men, memories of am tanks, LSTs, and training exercises are mixed with memories of rain, mud, and cold nights. There were also mess duty, guard duty, inspections, and other memorable features of military life. The bright side was liberty in Los Angeles and San Diego. The little town of Oceanside offered some amenities, but the greatest appeal was in the big cities. Some, who found good times in town too appealing, acquired a fresh understanding of military discipline when they returned to camp.

WILLIAM D. GERMAIN, Company A

We lived in tents and the nights were cold, so we put on all our blankets covered with our shelter halves, making them like a sleeping bag. We also hiked in the hills in Camp Pendleton and slept in the hills, while another company tried to surprise our camp. We did have one beer bust on the beach, which all enjoyed.



At the Boat Basin. Robert B. Wilson, Norman H. Spurlock, Richard Zenger, James A. Shiley. (Zenger)

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

In the evening, occasionally, Art (Arthur M.) Cochran would appropriate a comm jeep, tell the guard at the gate he was going for a radio road test, and then head into Oceanside for a bag full of hamburgers. I found Oceanside to be a very nice little liberty town. It had a theater, a small bowling alley, a great USO, and a few bars, though I wasn't a drinking man in those days.

On Christmas eve Bob (Robert B.) Wilson and I found ourselves sitting in a bar somewhere on the outskirts of Los Angeles. Bob thought he would give Bob (Robert W.) Pierce a call and see what was doing. Bob's parents lived in Los Angeles, and he invited us up. Jimmy (James E.) Braunn and several other men were at the house when we arrived. Bob's parents were great hosts

and made us feel right at home. We spent the evening doing various things such as playing cards, singing, eating, and a bit of drinking. All in all it was a great time, and to this day I appreciate the invitation to Mr. and Mrs. Pierce's home.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

Four of us CPs were assigned to B Company and occupied a tent with a sign reading "C-P TEE PEE" and listing the names of the occupants. The four were Chuck (Charles E.) Kirk, Tommy (LaMar A.) Thompson, Art (Arthur M.) Cochran, and I, all survivors of Radio School, Jacques' Farm, and the Hollywood interlude. The sign was Art's handiwork. We continued our occasional weekend forays to Los Angeles, still enjoying the warm hospitality of Bob (Robert W.) Pierce's family and friends. Later Bob was assigned to A Company.

DONALD C. HOUSTON, Company B

The thing I remember most about the Boat Basin is the mud. It started to rain shortly after our arrival and continued for the next couple of months. At the back gate to go into Oceanside there were always rags on the fence to wipe the mud off one's shoes. I also remember the fog and dampness every morning, along with the cold showers, and the one light bulb hanging in the pyramid tents. In spite of it all, we did okay.

ROBERT A. FISH, Company A

Of course we had time for liberty. Lieutenant Doc (Wiley W.) Loughmiller was living offbase at the time, and Lieutenant Edward M. Dooley and I visited him and his wife. Lieutenant Chesley O. Fremonth, who had a big Packard car, was usually our chauffeur to L.A. or Laguna Beach. Lieutenants Ed Dooley, Buck (Irwin Ronald) Buckner, Doc Livingston, Bill (William F.) Wilson, and others whose names I can't remember were regular customers for these trips. On one of these forays, we were robbed in L.A. Imagine six to eight Marines, with their hands in the air, being robbed by some young civilian.



At the Boat Basin. Sgt. Harvey B. Evans, better known as "Sacktime" Evans. (Coker)

BYRON G. SNEVA, Company C

We did have time for liberties, mostly in LA. I spent several great weekends with Bob (Robert W.) Pierce of Company A, his sister, and friends, either at the Pierce home, or dancing at the Palladium or, once, at a USC-UCLA football game. I also managed to visit with my younger brother stationed at Santa Ana in the Army Air Corps. Through most of October I was on mess duty, serving the officers' mess. That interfered both with my tank training and my weekend liberties. It even prevented me from seeing the premier of our movie, *Guadalcanal Diary*, which took place up at the Pendleton main camp.

ROBERT W. PIERCE, Company A

Since I was a lifelong resident of Los Angeles, my Boat Basin liberty time was spent pretty much on the highway hitchhiking to L.A. My parents encouraged bringing a few of my Marine buddies to our home, and we had many good times there. We were in and out of the comm (communications) shack daily, and on rare occasions we were able to check out a radio jeep for "special training purposes" in "Hell-A."

We watched the bulletin board at the Battalion command tent for the promotion lists, which were posted periodically. I was anxiously waiting for my Private First Class rating, which seemed to me long overdue. On the 23d of December 1943 (two days before Christmas) the promotion came through. With Christmas upon us we were looking forward to the holiday liberty. Company A caught the duty for the holiday weekend! I decided I couldn't miss being home and decided to chance being AWOL. I had gotten some PFC stripes and took them home for my mother and sisters to sew onto my shirts and uniform. We were all very proud of those stripes. In the meanwhile the guard roster had been made out at camp. I was not on the list for guard duty until the Marine whose name was alphabetically ahead of mine on the Company roster fell ill. The Corporal of the Guard couldn't find me to replace him. Only then did my absence come to light. At my deck court martial hearing Major Metzger simply asked "Where were you, PFC Pierce?" "At home," I replied. "You are now Private Pierce," he countered. "Bout face." I had a lot of stripes to remove, and it took another year to get my name back on the promotion list.

GEORGE LEGINO, Company B

On one weekend's pass from Oceanside, Lloyd L. Kitch and I were unsuccessful in hitching a ride to Long Beach. We returned to Oceanside and, after being "overserved," the MP's thought it best we spend the rest of the weekend at Camp Pendleton and escorted us there to the brig. I was bumped from gunner and transferred to Sergeant Milton L. Hansard's tank, B-10, and for some unknown reason was made a machine gunner.

JAMES J. CRUICE, Company B

Shortly after joining B Company at the Boat Basin, I was given three days brig time by Major Metzger for being eighteen hours over leave from Los Angeles.

DANIEL H. MAYNARD, Company A

Louis Metzger didn't like the two extra days some of us partied in L.A. and busted me from master sergeant to gunnery sergeant.

RICHARD L. WARP, Company D

On a Thursday night a couple of us went into Oceanside, had a few drinks, and got our hair cut for the Saturday inspection. On Friday night, Bob (Robert E.) Hughes, right out of boot camp, was looking to get his hair cut. When everybody told him the line in town was unbelievably long, he went looking for someone in camp to cut his hair. Bill (William C.) Moir assured Bob he had gone to barber college (if he had, it was to see his cousin graduate), and he would cut it. Well, Bill got hold of one of those scissors we used in kindergarten, and he chopped on Bob's hair. When he finished, Bob came to our tent as proud as a peacock and asked how we liked his haircut. We were astonished! When we said it looked like a mangy dog, he wouldn't believe us and went to the next tent. Same story. He finally found a mirror and saw the sorry sight. I never found out who finished off Bob's hair, but when we stood inspection on Saturday, his head was shaven. Major Metzger stopped, took one look, shook his head, and went on.

THE TARAWA DRAFT

On November 20, 1943, while the First Armored amphibian Battalion was still at the Boat Basin in Oceanside, California, U.S. forces made simultaneous attacks against Makin and Tarawa Atolls in the Gilbert Islands. The heaviest resistance by the Japanese was on Betio, in the Tarawa Atoll, a heavily fortified island of less than three square miles. The 2d Marine Division took the island in three days at a cost of over 1000 dead and 2000 wounded. Although this bloody victory confirmed much of Marine Corps amphibious doctrine, it also provided what became known as the "lessons of Tarawa." The haste of the campaign, poor communications, and insufficient shelling and bombing beforehand all contributed to the difficulties. But also at Tarawa there were too few amtracs to carry troops across the reefs at low tide, and no amtanks at all. The lessons of Tarawa would make a difference to the First Armored in the Marshalls and subsequent invasions.

The American public learned about Tarawa from radio and newspaper reports and was shocked at the number of dead and wounded in just three days, to take a tiny island no one had ever heard of. Though the seizure of Tarawa was an important step in the American drive across the Pacific, public reaction was outrage and bewilderment, and

politicians and editorialists called for investigations into the "fiasco." The First Armored had a special reason to be aware of Tarawa. In the hurried preparations for the invasion, fifty LVTs (amphibious tractors) were rushed from San Diego to the 2d Marine Division in the central Pacific, arriving just hours before the landing. Even with these, there were still not enough amtracs. Crews for these tractors were abruptly drafted from the First Armored and other Marine units and sent overseas for the Tarawa invasion.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

Though transfers out of the Battalion were usually of those who did not fit, we selected only the best for transfer to the 2d Marine Division. One officer and fifty men were thus deployed early and took part in the landing at Tarawa.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

Around mid-October 1943 I returned from liberty one weekend and found that a number of the Battalion members had been transferred to another organization. It seems that men were needed in a hurry for an upcoming operation and anyone found on the base was subject to transfer. It was later we learned that the transferred personnel were assigned to units participating in the Tarawa, Gilbert Islands, operation.

DONALD C. HOUSTON, Company B

While we were at the Boat Basin, another kid, named Buczak, and I went down to San Diego. When we returned late Saturday night, the guard at the back gate said to us, "If you don't want to get transferred, stay away." Sure enough, my friend Buczak got transferred the next day, a Sunday, into a new amphibian tractor battalion they were forming. They didn't take me, I guess, because I was a crew chief.

PREPARING FOR DEPARTURE

In the fall of 1943 the 1st, 2d, and 3d Marine Divisions were heavily committed to their invasions at Cape Gloucester in New Britain, at Tarawa, and at Bougainville. For whatever operation was to come next, the First Armored was attached to the newly formed 4th Marine Division, headquartered at Camp Pendleton. We knew that all the training, equipping, and other preparations had to be leading toward some kind of action, but no one in the Battalion knew even faintly what great events were planned. In late fall, however, it became obvious that we would soon be shipping out, though to what destination or to what action, no one could tell.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

On 20 November 1943 we joined the 4th Marine Division, just three months after our activation and with a constant demand for personnel for other units. We were well

on the road to becoming a combat-ready battalion. It was a shock to find that the 4th Division staff was not helpful, and in many ways were obstructive. They were busy, new at their jobs and ill-trained, and had little time for a major and his strange battalion. They had no concept of the capabilities and limitations of the unit. (As an example, on one occasion we were ordered to put to sea to fire anti-aircraft practice with destroyers.) The operations and logistics officers were at odds and would not cooperate on the movement of our companies after a maneuver. But worst of all, rather than let the Battalion operate as a unit, companies of armored amphibians were *ATTACHED* to the infantry regiments, which meant the infantry took over full command and, with it, the logistic support requirement for the attached unit. It all meant that the supplies and equipment of the attached unit became the property of the infantry regiment. This would have dire effect in the forthcoming operation.

In early December, under four months after we were activated, I was called to the 4th Division Chief of Staff's office. There he drew the outline of some islands, but did not name them, and asked how I would recommend the First Armored Amphibian Battalion be used. With no knowledge of the beaches, surf, enemy dispositions, or objectives, I did the best I could in ten minutes. So much for detailed planning.

BYRON G. SNEVA, Company C

Beginning in mid-October we began to get official announcements and scuttlebutt about shipping out for overseas. Twice Major Metzger held general assemblies, once to tell us we would leave soon, but later that we would not leave right away. We did make real preparations for departure. We crated material for shipment. We got shots for typhus, yellow fever, and cholera. We turned in our M-1 rifles for carbines. We stenciled the cryptic direction on our seabags, "FRAY-83-NORTH." And we drew new equipment—Marine K-bar knives, life belts, and entrenching tools. I started a plan in early November to have \$18.75 a month taken from my pay to buy war bonds.

CHAPTER

THREE

The San Clemente Maneuvers

At the end of December 1943 the Battalion secured its Boat Basin camp, moved by motor transport to San Diego, and boarded LSTs and other ships in the harbor there. The Battalion was assigned, by company and platoon, to twelve LSTs. Some First Armored men celebrated New Year's eve in San Diego as their last stateside liberty. Late on Saturday, January 1, the ships put to sea for landing maneuvers on the beaches of San Clemente, an island in the Santa Barbara group, about 70 miles from San Diego.

The San Clemente maneuvers were staged as a rehearsal for the next invasion of Japanese territory, as yet unidentified. For some units—Marine air observers and JASCO—these maneuvers probably had some value, but for both the amtracs and the amtanks they demonstrated how little the Navy and Marine Corps then knew about how to employ tracked landing vehicles in combat. The First Armored fared very badly. The high-pressure haste of the operation and, also, the inept and perverse behavior of some LST skippers, were enough to make the exercise difficult. Bad weather, which came up on January 2, made it disastrous. In the rough seas several tanks were sunk and others disabled. LSTs and amtanks did not work well together. Sergeant Sherman L. Strother, a Guadalcanal veteran, was lost when his tank, D-15, sank; his body was never recovered.

We were all back in the San Diego harbor on January 4, replacing lost and damaged equipment and getting set, as was said in the official reports, to "sail for duty beyond the seas."

DALE L. BARKER, Company D

I had two brothers in the Navy. The younger one, Wyburn, was a bosun's mate on LST 274. One of the greatest coincidences of our lives, he and I discovered we would be sailing from San Diego in the same convoy. We went on liberty together on December 31, called home, and had an unforgettable New Year's eve just catching up on each other.

JAMES J. CRUICE, Company B

On our last night in port in San Diego I talked a sailor into loaning me his uniform, and I went over the side and down a Jacob's ladder. I spent the last night in town having a hell of a good time. However, after having too much to drink, it was real scary trying to get back up that Jacob's ladder at 4:00 a.m. On Saipan, I think, Luther M. Flattum and I were the last two privates in B Company to make PFC.

ROBERT L. CONRAD, Company B

On Friday night, December 31, 1943 we went on our last liberty in the good old US of A. It was appropriate, too, that it happened to be New Year's eve. We all made the best of a bad situation and returned to the LST we had been assigned to earlier. That ship was made just a short distance from my home in Savage MN. It was taken down the Minnesota River to the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota, from there to New Orleans, through the Panama Canal, and back up the west coast to San Diego.

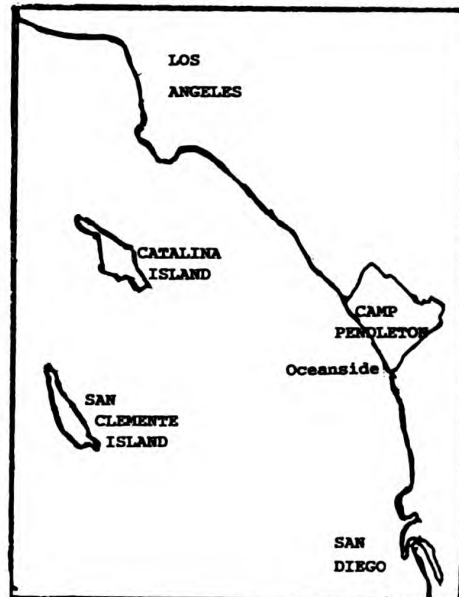
On Saturday morning, January 1, 1944, we were engaged in the very unpleasant occupation of loading ship. The supplies consisted of our equipment, which included all combat gear, much of the ammunition we would be using, and voluminous amounts of grease, oil, parts, etc. so important to the operation of a battalion of amphibian tanks.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

As all four line companies were attached to the infantry regiments of the 4th Marine Division, and as there was no utilization of the Battalion headquarters, the command group did not embark for these maneuvers. From all reports they were a disaster: ships refusing to refuel sinking vehicles and, on one occasion, an LST running down an LVTA. Several Marines lost their lives in this poorly run exercise. I met the returning Marines to find them wet, tired, and frustrated. Our first son was born on the night of 5 January 1944.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

From my viewpoint, the San Clemente maneuvers ranked high among the more miserable debacles of world military history. The LST carrying B Company (or a substantial part of it) lacked troop quarters to accommodate all the Marines on board. One result of this deficiency was my bivouacking the first night out on the tank deck, under the bow of one of the amtanks. Sometime during the predawn hours, my sleep was rudely interrupted by a sudden deceleration of the ship, accompanied by loud sounds



of grating, tearing metal. Within minutes, a wave of cold sea water swept along the deck, drenching me and other B Company troops billeted among the amtanks. It turned out that the illustrious skipper of our LST, cruising off San Clemente Island, had run us aground, holed and flooded the forward portion of the ship. To lighten ship, he ordered the amphibian vehicles on his tank deck to debark. I'm not sure whether all amtanks aboard got off that night, because the tank deck was awash as we departed, and the vehicle I was riding became waterborne practically at the top of the bow ramp.

After exiting the LST in the dark of night, our amtanks hovered about the stricken vessel, awaiting daylight and further orders. The seas were the roughest we had yet encountered, and we were tossed about thoroughly during a seemingly endless night. We shut down engines to conserve fuel and restarted them only to operate bilge pumps and try to maintain some semblance of position near our luckless LST. When daylight came, many vehicles were low on fuel, but San Clemente was visible several miles to the east. Platoon Sergeant Ford M. French wisely elected to beach his charges on San Clemente. The seaworthiness of First Armored's amtanks left much to be desired and, without fuel to operate bilge pumps, they had little prospect of remaining afloat for long. Yet the decision to land on San Clemente was not to be taken lightly. A Naval bombardment was scheduled to soften up the beaches in preparation for our mock invasion later in the day. The invasion was mock, but the bombardment, by U.S. Navy warships, was to be real.

I never found out whether the Navy had learned of the plight of the shipwrecked Marines on the shores of San Clemente, or the bombardment was directed at some beach distant from our refuge, but we were not subjected to "friendly fire" on that occasion. After spending a cold, miserable, hungry day and night on the island, we saw the seas calm down a bit and another LST appear offshore. After bringing the amtanks aboard that ship, we were transported to the Destroyer Base at San Diego. There, First Armored was combat-loaded aboard a number of LSTs for departure to the war zones in the Pacific.

ROBERT W. PIERCE, Company A

We held maneuvers off San Clemente Island in foul weather and rough seas. Our tank did make shore but had to be towed by another tank to do so. The engine had quit and we spent the night on the island in cold rain. During the night we sent periodic blinker-light signals to the LST sitting offshore. We had to identify our unit and describe the problems we were having with the vehicle. The signal gun we used was about seven or eight inches in diameter and sent a very dim signal to the comm tower on the ship. It was difficult to keep the portable flasher on target while sending code, and many words of our message had to be repeated before the LST would acknowledge. The lieutenant became a little impatient with the process, but we stayed with it. The maintenance man finally got the tank engine running, and we boarded the ship about noon the next day. We returned to San Diego.

ROBERT A. FISH, Company A

Our landing maneuvers on San Clemente Island were a disaster. A storm moved in shortly after launching the LVTAs. The wind was blowing so hard we never made it to the beach. We were scattered all over the ocean. Our engine quit on us, and we were at the mercy of the sea until a boat hooked a line on us and towed us to an APA. They let a ladder down, and we climbed aboard and let the LVTA sink. After they took us to sickbay and gave us a shot of brandy, we were okay for the ride back to the destroyer base.

DONALD L. FERCHAU, Company A

The plan for the San Clemente maneuvers, as I remember them, was for us in our LVTAs to hit the beach at 0600 hours, the amtracs immediately behind, the land tanks next, and then, I suppose, the artillery. It was a good show. We backed off and got set to go in again.

But that's when disaster struck. Clouds rolled in and the sea erupted violently. We were seasick Marines on small, rolling, bouncing amphibian tanks that were slowly but surely running out of gas, taking on water, and sinking. If the engine didn't run, neither would the bilge pumps! The radios wouldn't work at this point for the same reason. Darkness was setting in, but there was still no panic. But it was time to squeeze the handle to puncture the CO₂ pellets that would inflate the life belts. We also checked, belatedly, who could and could not swim. When we knew for sure we were out of gas and sinking, we got the ammo passer topside and began to jettison cargo and to bail the water with our helmets.

Since we couldn't radio for help, Whitey (Thomas I.) Coleman, our CP, climbed up on the turret of that rolling, bouncing tank to send a semaphore message. The rest of the crew held his ankles, legs, etc. while he signaled a destroyer, "SOS. OUT OF GAS. SINKING FAST." The destroyer blinked a response and came our way. By the time it reached us, the water was lapping at the catwalks.

WILLIAM D. GERMAIN, Company A

We made several landings off San Clemente in very rough seas [and in the same tank as Ferchau, described above]. Our troubles began when we ran out of gas very far from shore, and the waves kept coming over us. Once we lost power and momentum, our bilge pumps wouldn't work, we started to fill up with water and were starting to sink. We got Whitey (Thomas I.) Coleman, our CP, to stand on top of the turret and semaphore while, because of the rough seas, we held him up by holding onto his legs. He signaled a destroyer, saying, "SOS WE ARE SINKING," and the destroyer backed right up to us. Now, destroyers look small a way off but, when that one came within 15 or 20 feet of us, our tank seemed awful small. They threw us a shot line, and we pulled a large rope, which we attached to the big eye on the bow of the tank. But every time our tank would come down and tighten the line, the line would break. The destroyer

radioed an LCI (landing craft, infantry), which backed up to us and threw us a cable. This time it held. As the tank was now nearly sinking, all of us got off the tank except the driver and tank commander. They towed the tank to a large ship, which tried to lift it aboard. They only had time to attach the rear lifting cables when the tank sank. So they lifted it aboard that way, but in doing so the engine and other parts were torn loose.

BYRON G. SNEVA, Company C

For the San Clemente maneuvers, and for the invasion afterward, our crew for Tank C-5 was Platoon Sergeant Richard P. Greene of Winsocket RI as tank commander, PFC Harry B. Granlee of San Francisco as driver, PFC Daniel J. Olsen of Tyler MN as radio operator, PFC Terence K. Hedgepeth of Fort Collins CO as 37mm gunner, PFC Theard L. Mayeaux of New Orleans as .30-caliber machine gunner, and PFC Byron G. Sneva of Fergus Falls MN also as .30-caliber machine gunner. Our ship was LST 119.

Late in the afternoon following our mock attack on San Clemente, the swells became too big for the LSTs to open their bow doors and drop the ramp to let our tanks come aboard. Our tank, C-5, finally ran out of fuel, and none of the ships in the area could provide us. Evening was closing in, and we were drifting about seven miles offshore from San Clemente when an LCI spotted us and came to our rescue. In the process of coming alongside so we could climb on board, the tank punctured several big gashes in the side of the LCI. That caused a great deal of concern, and they began stuffing the gashes with any kind of material they could find at hand, forgetting about us. Finally we got aboard, and the tank was put under tow. It began to take on water as, at the towing speed, it was going through the swells instead of over them. In only a short distance it began to sink and almost took the LCI with it, until the crew hurriedly chopped the towing cable loose. From then on we had a nice ride back into San Diego, arriving late, to meet the concern of the Company, all on my 21st birthday. The swabbies were telling us that we should be up for survivor's leave. **Uh huh!** Back in San Diego, we were issued a new tank, and C-5 and its crew came to life again.

EDWARD G. RIZKALLA, Company C

The sea on maneuvers off San Clemente Island was really rough, with wave crests that looked like forty feet high. The tank was bobbing like a cork, and my hatch, in my position next to the driver, was open. I happened to look down this one time when we were on top of the crest of this huge wave. The view below us looked like a huge hole in the water. We started falling into this hole. I secured the hatch and could feel us fall. Fall we did. I looked through the glass, and it seemed like we were under water forever. Finally we surfaced. That was an experience I can't forget.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

Although the LVTA-1s had two 55-gallon fuel tanks, we were authorized to fill only one tank for the maneuvers off San Clemente Island. Somehow Larry Murray got

enough fuel to fill both tanks, and I'm glad he did. We were put aboard LSTs and taken out to an area off San Clemente. The seas at first were not too rough, but later it got pretty bad. The LST that took us out lost its loading ramp so that we couldn't get back aboard. We bounced around out there for quite a period of time. Bobby (Robert A.) Charton was terribly seasick and was lying near the engine compartment wishing he could die. I don't know how Larry Murray felt, but he was not a swimmer, and we were running low on fuel. We were afraid to shut down the engine because then we wouldn't have any bilge pumps, and we were taking in water. To conserve gas Larry decided to shut the engine down for a while to see what would happen. If we took too much water, he would restart the engine. It worked for us. I don't remember how long we waited to be picked up, but finally an LST, 121 I believe, was able to recover us. Boy, what a time. I understand a Navy chief remarked to his men, "There are the real sailors." I don't know if a Marine likes being called a sailor, but I took it as a compliment. I was very happy to finally reach dry land.

DONALD SCHARF, *Company D*

On the day we boarded LST 270 for maneuvers and landing practice off San Clemente Island, the sea was rough. I knew I was in trouble, for I couldn't even ride in the back seat of a car without getting motion sickness. I was seasick more times than I can remember over the next two years, going from one end of the Pacific Ocean to the other. LSTs and smaller ships do not give you a smooth ride in rough seas. At times you could hear rivets popping out of the bulkheads when the ship would crest a wave and slam down into the bottom of a swell. Everything on board shook.

GEORGE F. ROBERTS, *Company D*

We left the San Diego Destroyer Base on Jan. 1, 1944 for maneuvers off San Clemente Island. While out there the water got rough. We were all seasick, low on gas and couldn't pump our bilges. It seems it was mostly the 3d Platoon that got stranded. As we were nearly out of gas, Lawrence E. Murray had our CP, Joe (Joseph C.) Baumbach, signal our LST for permission to come aboard. They signaled back, "We are weighing anchor." We then started signaling another LST (friendlier, we hoped) to let us come aboard. The skipper must have been green, just out of Annapolis, and signaled come ahead. The water being rough, and Murray on the bow to give me directions, I broke one ramp chain trying to back on. Sometimes the ramp would be clear out of the water, and sometimes the tank deck would almost be awash. Murray relieved me, got lined up and, when the ramp was under water, drove it in head first. Of course the skipper couldn't pull up the ramp, and it banged up and down until it broke the other chain and went down to Davy Jones' locker. They had to back all the way in to the Destroyer Base to keep from shipping water, which took most of the night. The ship's crew didn't like us.

Three other crews had to abandon their tanks when they ran out of gas. One tank was on a tow line behind a destroyer. Tank Commander Sherman L. Strother and

Joe (Joseph O.) Voigt went back to start the tank and pump the bilge. The line parted and Sergeant Strother went down with the tank. Voigt was a good swimmer, and they fished him out with a boat hook.

Another tank had been abandoned, full of water and with the hatches dogged down. A cargo ship saw it, swung a boom over the side and hoisted it aboard. When they got into the Destroyer Base, they said, "Hey, did some of you Marines lose a tank?"

JOSEPH VOIGT, Company D

I was in the tank with Sergeant "Charlie" Sherman L. Strother the day we were to make the landing on San Clemente. The weather didn't seem too bad when we left the LST, but it seemed that we no sooner got in the water when one hell of a storm came up. In fact, it got so rough, they decided to cancel the landing. By then, it was too rough to get back aboard the LSTs. We drifted for hours and it got dark. It looked like most of the fleet had left us and gone back to San Diego. In fact, we felt like we were pretty much abandoned.

As near as I can remember it was about midnight when a mine-sweeper almost ran us down. They did see us, and they stopped, throwing their craft in reverse. The captain shouted down that first they would throw over a line, we could tie up alongside them, and all of us could come aboard. Then at the last moment the captain of the minesweeper shouted down, "Well, maybe a couple of you ought to stay aboard the tank, and we'll throw you a line and tow you into the island of San Clemente." Sergeant Strother said he would stay aboard, and I volunteered to stay with him. The minesweeper crew reeled out a 3/4-inch cable with a couple of C-clamps. But it was so doggoned rough we couldn't get out on the bow of the tank to run the cable through that eyehook and secure it. So what we did was to leave both the front hatches open—over the driver's seat and the radio operator's seat—and run the cable in one hatch and out the other, and put a couple of clamps on it.

When Charlie and I got up in the turret of the tank, the mine-sweeper took off, going pretty fast. I guess we hadn't traveled over 50 or 100 feet when we noticed all this water pouring in those two front hatches, and were thinking how stupid we were to do that. I said to Charlie, "This s.o.b. is going to sink," and just about that time, it did.

All we were wearing for life preservers was an old rubber inner tube type of deal that went around your waist and had a couple of CO₂ capsules that were supposed to inflate the tube when you squeezed it. Well, they didn't work. Although I was a very good swimmer, I don't know to this day how I was able to stay afloat with all that heavy clothing we had on. That was the last I saw of Sergeant Strother. I was in the water for what seemed to me almost an eternity, though I know it wasn't. The minesweeper crew knew that the tank had sunk because the 3/4-inch cable broke when the tank went down. I guess all that water inside the tank added to its weight. The crew told me later that, when the cable broke, it shook the whole minesweeper, which was a wooden-hulled one. They stopped the ship, put it in reverse, and backed up. I couldn't see a thing, for I was

just trying to stay above water and, you know, they wouldn't turn any lights on because of the blackout. I guess I was lucky they backed right into me. At the time I seemed to be worried about getting my legs hung up in the screws, not really thinking they were up underneath quite a way. I couldn't see anything, but I could hear some sailor on deck hollering, "We'll throw you a line." I was gasping, swallowing water, and just trying to stay afloat. But finally that line they threw hit me in the head, and I don't think you could have cut me loose with an acetylene torch the way I welded myself to it. Although I was so winded and full of sea water that I could hardly talk, I tried to tell them there was another man out there. They did understand and were looking for him.

I don't know how long I was on the deck before a couple of guys took me down below, undressed me, threw me into a sack, and gave me a shot of brandy. They tried to get me warm, for I guess I was suffering from hypothermia.

Thinking back on it, I say to myself how calm Charlie was about the whole hard deal. Even more amazing, I found out later he didn't even know how to swim. Charlie was a very brave man. Lieutenant Milton B. Curtis said he would write to Charlie's family. I have felt bad over the years that I didn't get his address and do so myself.

WILLIAM C. MOIR, Company D

I was on tank D-14 throughout our time in the Pacific. For the San Clemente maneuvers Clinton D. Norrell was our tank commander, Harold K. Miller the driver, Bob (Robert A.) Davis the radioman, "Doc" (Derk A.) Vloedman the gunner, and Arlo D. "Smitty" Smith and I the machine gunners. On January 2 we made two landings on San Clemente and did some firing. I noted later that I had fun.

On Monday, January 3, we again made some practice landings in very rough seas. When we tried to reboard our LST 271, the rough seas made it impossible, even with Miller's expert driving. One minute the ramp would be under water, the next six feet out of the water. D-14 and four other tanks then attempted being towed by the LST, but the towline broke. We then tried following the LST to calmer waters, but that didn't work too well either, and the LST almost took a few legs when it rammed D-13. Later D-11 did get aboard the LST. At about 1430 D-14 ran out of gas, and the bilge pump quit of course, though at first we didn't take on much water. We drifted away from the other tanks and, as they faded in all directions, we were all getting seasick. That tank seemed little in that big ocean, and as the seas got rougher, it was tossed around like a top. In late afternoon the sun was going down, and so we thought was our tank. A Navy blimp came over, and I remember hoping he wouldn't take our tank turret for a submarine turret. Our hep radioman, Bob Davis, used a flashlight to signal the blimp, and it signaled a destroyer, which came alongside in a few minutes. After trying several times, unsuccessfully, to throw us a line, the destroyer signaled a minesweeper, and soon YMS 264 came up. We caught the first line they shot across our bow, and they took us in tow. They threw us another line with a waterproof bag containing a pint of whiskey, some apples, matches, candy, and cigarettes. Most of us were too sick to enjoy these

things. We held on till 0030, when the tank had so much water in its hold, Davis signaled the minesweeper to take us aboard. They threw us lines, and with our life belts on, we jumped into the cold ocean one by one and were hauled aboard, scraping our knees on barnacles as we were hauled up the side of the ship.

On board, they gave us dry clothes, hot ham, eggs and coffee, and the captain brought out a bottle of brandy. That little minesweeper felt like a cement sidewalk compared to the tank. Tired and still sick, we were given bunks, which I'm sure some of the crew had to give up. Next morning, January 4, we were told our tank had sunk and they had had to cut the line. We learned by radio later that tanks D-12, D-15, and our tank, D-14, had been retrieved and the crews were safe. There was no word on D-13. We were taken back to San Diego and the destroyer base, where it was good to see other men as they came in. Everybody was laughing and shouting and slapping backs, but a few guys had tears in their eyes. We still hadn't heard anything of the crew of D-13. Lieutenant Milton B. Curtiss, a swell guy, hadn't slept all night and was tired and worried. Much later in the day, the D-13 crew came in. They had lost their tank and had been in the water for three-quarters of an hour before a destroyer picked them up and brought them in. It was a harrowing experience.

EDWARD G. RIZKALLA, Company C

Once on the San Clemente maneuvers, Captain Bill (William L.) Eubanks, the C Company commander, and I looked over the side of our LST and saw what looked like thousands of mackerel right against the side of the ship. I mean you could walk on them. Captain Eubanks said, "Rizkalla, go down below and see if you can get some hooks, string, and some dough." I did that, and we baited the hooks with a little ball of dough. When we lowered the hook on the line without a sinker, they bit before it hit the water. We pulled up about six mackerel in about ten minutes, each about a foot and a half long. The Captain had me take them down to the galley to have them cooked. I can tell you that was the greatest tasting fish I ever ate. Don't forget, out of the water and into the pan within an hour, and no pollution.

HARRY L. PAUL, Company D

We returned to San Diego on January 4 to get replacements for our tanks and to service and repair tanks. An oil line on D-9 broke, threw all the oil, and the tank burned. By the 5th we had all our tanks aboard ship, ready for departure.

WILLIAM D. GERMAIN, Company A

We had to get a new tank delivered to us at the destroyer base, where we were loading to depart overseas. After we were aboard ship we had to work on the tank to ready it for combat. As the 37mm gunner I had to clean and adjust the gun, testing it by pushing it back in recoil by hand to see if it would extract brass. Not until we started to the beach did we really know if the gun would fire. But everything worked well.

CHAPTER
FOUR

From San Diego to Kwajalein

In two or three days the Battalion's tank losses from the ill-fated San Clemente maneuvers had been made up by replacement or repair as needed. We were as nearly ready for departure as was possible in the short time available. We were shipping out for combat, and our target was the Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands. Very few, if any, of us even knew that Kwajalein existed, and no one at all in the First Armored knew we were to invade it.

The LSTs were combat loaded with amtank and amtrac battalions, and also an artillery regiment, the 14th Marines. In order to arrive at the target on time the lumbering LSTs, which could make only nine or ten knots, had to leave San Diego a week ahead of the main assault force. According to the First Armored muster rolls, the Battalion's five companies were assigned variously to twelve LSTs as shown to the right. Some H&S personnel in the convoy traveled on the same LSTs as A Company, others on LST 274 with C Company. Some ships left San Diego on January 5, 1944, and were designated Flotilla 1, the rest on January 6 as Flotilla 2.

FIRST ARMORED LST ASSIGNMENTS San Diego to Kwajalein	
H&S C.	- LSTs 42+126+274
A Co.	- LSTs 42+126+223
B Co.	- LSTs 38+43+122+221
C Co.	- LSTs 119+128+274
D Co.	- LSTs 121+270

The main assault force, with men, equipment, and supplies from other units of the 4th Marine Division, put out to sea on January 13 in a flotilla of cargo ships, troop ships,

and LSDs. A few First Armored men rode with this group, on three ships: AKA-7, AKA-10, and LSD-5 (the *USS Gunstan Hall*). The Battalion's rear echelon shipped out still later, some on the *SS George P. McKay*, which sailed on January 23, and the rest on the *SS Kit Carson*, which sailed on January 30.

Some men in the Battalion had served overseas before, but for most this was their first voyage on the open sea. Even lifelong landlubbers, however, eventually found their sea legs sufficiently to move about on deck with reasonable steadiness, even to pass through a chow line without losing both balance and food when the ship was rolling. Some had more trouble than others with seasickness.

Besides the sea, there was life aboard LSTs to adapt to. Water rationing was standard procedure, and showers, when allowed, were of the saltwater variety. LSTs were always overcrowded with men and equipment. They originally had compartments designated as crew's quarters and troop quarters. As more 20mm and 40mm guns were added, however, the number of crewmen increased, and the former troop compartments became additional crew's quarters. The displaced Marines regularly slept with their tanks on the tank deck, on the weather deck, or wherever they could find space.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

We embarked on LST 43 on January 6 and sailed early in the evening from San Diego. We began a new and strange kind of life that we were to know too well before many months—life on an LST. By the third day monotony was setting in. It was slow going, with not much topside but ocean, sky and the other LSTs in our convoy. The chow was pretty good most of the time, and the ship store had a good stock, but limited mostly to cigarettes, candy, stationery, etc. We spent most of the time playing cards, reading, shooting the breeze, or just watching the ocean go by. There were other 4th Division troops aboard and not much space. We would sleep just about any place we could find a spot.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

As I recall, much of B Company traveled from San Diego to Kwajalein aboard LST 122. It was a clean, well-run vessel, and its crew was more hospitable to Marine Corps troops than most others we encountered, before and after. On our voyage, it was unavoidably overcrowded, again with quarters inadequate for the First Armored and other 4th Marine Division troops aboard.

Departure from San Diego Bay was a dramatic and memorable occasion. We did not know our destination, but we did know we were "shipping out." A sailor on a neighboring LST, moored alongside LST 122, but farther from the dock, asked me to "cast off that wire" (a wire rope securing his ship to LST 122). I did so, and the other LST moved out into the channel. Within minutes LST 122 also cast off her mooring lines and swung into the channel. As we cleared Point Loma, I took a position near the aft superstructure, facing forward. I was not especially pleased to see, from that vantage

point, LST 122 flexing its midsection as it plowed into the waves. This phenomenon did little for either my incipient seasickness or my confidence in the seaworthiness of LSTs. The San Diego-Kauai segment of this voyage consumed about ten days at sea. Not only are LSTs excruciatingly slow, but zigzagging in convoy lengthened the trip.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

When we left San Diego late in the evening of January 6, 1944, we didn't know our destination. Our first full day at sea was very rough, with plenty of seasickness. Gasoline drums on the top deck broke loose spilling gasoline all over the place. After the sea calmed down, life was a little better. The nights were really beautiful, and every night the fellows got together for a jam session. The ship was so crowded that men slept anywhere they could find room. Water was rationed and permitted only at certain hours, and fresh water showers were out altogether. Most of the men began growing beards. On January 9 we painted the tanks a sea blue, and on the 10th the crews gave their tanks names. One day we fired our personal weapons.

MAYER S. GOLDBERG, Company D

From January 6 to January 12 on our LST, I recall very little as I was dying daily from seasickness and never left my sack. I knew this would happen after eating Navy pork the first day out of San Diego.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

On our LST I found a comfortable spot on the tank deck and made my home on top forward of D-11. I brought along a paperback book, *King's Row*, which I enjoyed.

THOMAS T. OYLER, Company C

On the way to the Marshalls, C Company was aboard LST 119. We were pleased because we had been on maneuvers with them. They were a good crew, and we had gotten used to each other. From my standpoint it made the long trip easier.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

We embarked on the amphibious ships and sailed out of San Diego harbor the afternoon of 6 January. I was on LST 42, a crowded and poorly run ship. The remainder of the Battalion, not embarked in amphibious ships, were on transports that sailed about a week later. We had no operation orders, no communication plan, no landing plan, nothing! (With hindsight I can state this was the poorest planned and conducted operation I have observed in three wars and 34 years of active service. The official Marine Corps history acknowledges this fact.) The Pacific was rough and the narrow-beamed LSTs rolled all the time. That voyage conditioned me for life to dislike the Navy.

DALE L. BARKER, Company D

Dog Company was on LSTs 121 and 270, with some amtrac and artillery Marines also aboard. As proved to be usual on LSTs, there were not enough bunks for the troops aboard. Marines slept topside, on the tank deck among the seabags, or wherever they could find space. I found a place to put my sack in a compartment so hot it was being used to dry laundry.

On LST 121 I did what was to become a pattern for me. I reported up to the ship's radio shack, offered my services either for radio operation or maintenance, and worked there much of the time for the duration of trip. The Navy radiomen were good operators, but there were no maintenance personnel in the crew. The communications officer, Ensign Sidney Friend, was friendly and intelligent but, typically for LSTs, had no previous experience or qualifications for this assignment. After a few days at sea the ship's radar went out. After I tried unsuccessfully to repair it, the Navy transferred a radar technician to LST 121 by breeches buoy from another ship in the convoy, and he made the repairs.

STORM AT SEA

On Tuesday, January 11, our convoy was struck by a severe storm, with special consequences for the First Armored. We learned that night the inadequacy of our procedures for securing our amtanks on LST tank decks. In the pitching and rolling of the LSTs in the storm, tanks on several ships snapped their chains. The 16-ton behemoths slid back and forth, slamming into each other and the bulkheads, with terrifying and disastrous effects. On LST 223, Corporal Harvey C. Morgenstern of A Company died of injuries and was buried at sea on January 12. There is some confusion in eyewitness accounts of other casualties, but the records show that on LST 43, Corporal Thomas V. Kiser of B Company was injured and, later in Hawaii, transferred to a hospital. Apparently also, an artilleryman aboard LST 43 was killed when he was crushed between tanks.

ROBERT W. PIERCE, Company A

Sailing from the mainland to the islands, we saw rougher weather than we would experience the rest of our overseas tour (other than typhoons). Ocean swells as high as the ship itself would pound her hull. LST 126 would creak from stem to stern. The winds were so severe that no one would risk going topside for fear of being blown overboard. The tanks were secured by heavy chains running from the bow and stern to anchors in the ship's deck. A turnbuckle was used to tighten the chains. In the heavy seas it was necessary to check periodically to be sure the vehicles would not come loose from their mooring and crash through the ship's bulkhead. On another LST, Corporal Harvey C. Morgenstern of A Company, trying to tighten the chains which secured his tank, was killed when the ship lurched and a chain came loose and crushed him.

DONALD L. FERCHAU, Company A

The storm tossed the convoy about like toys. LSTs were rolling violently about from side to side, but—thank God!—never capsized. The Marines have forever dubbed them "floating bathtubs." The violent rocking of our ship caused too much strain on the chains battening down those 30,000-pound tanks. All of them began sliding from side to side, banging the bulkheads with tremendous and lethal force.

I witnessed Corporal Morgenstern's burial at sea. It was an impressive ceremony, but one I wish I had never seen under such circumstances.

WILLIAM D. GERMAIN, Company A

When the storm hit us, we were wakened by the noise of the tanks banging against each other and against the inside bulkheads. Many had broken their tie-down chains and were moving back and forth with each wave. I remember jumping from the top of one tank to another, dropping planks and 4X4's between them when they moved apart. Eventually that slowed their sideways movements, and we dropped down on the deck between them and fastened new chains on them. We then wedged planks and 4X4's between the tanks and bulkheads to keep them from moving sideways again. This was another lesson we learned the hard way. The steel tracks on steel decks were hard to keep from sliding. After that they put wood on the tank deck, and the tracks would dig into the wood. We never again had trouble with the tanks sliding. That was one night I'll never forget.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

From that storm both LST 122's crew and Company B learned much about the art of securing cargo for sea. When loading the amtanks, we had stretched chains from their bow and stern towing rings to mooring points on the ship's tank deck, believing that precaution more than adequate. Wrong! The mountainous waves and howling winds caused the ship to pitch and roll with frightening violence, breaking loose the amtanks and causing them to slide brutally together and into the bulkheads and structure of the ship. Whenever I hear the expression, "All hell broke loose," I recall the bedlam and terror of that fearful night aboard LST 122 between San Diego and Hawaii.

At the height of the emergency, I found myself on top of an amtank which was alternately skidding violently into its neighbors and slamming against the ship's bulkhead. I badly wanted off that vehicle, but in no way was I prepared to venture onto the deck where all those collisions were taking place between aviation fuel-laden amtanks. I looked longingly at the platform above the aft end of the tank deck, but it was five or six amtanks away and as many death-defying jumps between vehicles. During a momentary lull between furious, jolting collisions, I moved swiftly forward of the amtank's turret and seized the tube of the 37mm gun in a death grip. On the ship's rear tank deck platform, Company B commander, Lieutenant "Stu" (Edgar S.) Carlson, hollered, "You

hang on there, Hill!" Even before this incident, I suspect he had regarded me as a "loose cannon," in his organization, but this time I gladly and assiduously obeyed. Each collision was shockingly severe, but in the several seconds between jolts I was able to retighten my grasp on the sturdy 37mm gun and came through that experience with no more serious injuries than multiple bruises.

The force of the storm and its effects on the convoy caused the ships to leave formation and steer headings best calculated to alleviate the hazards presented by wildly shifting cargo. The ship's command gave the Marine passengers to understand that all lives aboard were in our hands; unless we promptly stopped the violent cargo movement, the vessel would be torn apart and sink. LST 122 headed directly bow-on into the turbulent seas, and the terrible pitching and rolling motion abated somewhat. The Navy produced more mooring chains and a quantity of heavy timbers. With the ship's motion attenuated, and by judicious timing of the pitches and rolls, brave Marines and sailors were able to jam timbers between amtanks and between amtanks and structural parts of the ship, thus fixing one errant vehicle at a time precariously into place. Multiple chains were then extended between each amtank's tracks (both sides, fore and aft) and mooring points on the ship's deck. One Marine aboard LST 122 was crushed and badly injured during this operation. Later, when sea conditions permitted, he was transferred to the destroyer escorting our convoy, whose complement included a doctor. Some men did die of injuries in that fearful storm. The destroyer moved in close to LST 122 at one point so that we might observe a burial at sea, the first such ceremony most of us had witnessed up to that time.

Never again did any First Armored vehicle embark aboard a ship without being properly dogged down. We used a lot of chain and timber, but the equipment thereafter stayed in place. I suspect that the LST crews also learned from that storm many fine points of lashing down cargo. One learns, if one survives, to appreciate the unforgiving violence of the sea.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

Some men had chosen to sleep down in the tank deck, on or around the tanks, and one First Armored man was hurt very badly. A Marine from the artillery outfit traveling with us on LST 43 was hurt worse. He had his chest smashed. I watched him later as he was dying, up by the sick bay—a sight I can't forget. After that we stood guard to check the chains every half hour.

GEORGE F. ROBERTS, Company D

One of the sliding tanks put a corner of its bow through a bulkhead. Somebody looked through the hole into a compartment and said it was full of bangalore torpedoes. After that, several of the boys who had been sleeping on the tanks moved up topside.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

The night the tanks broke loose in the tank deck, the place reminded me of a herd of wild elephants on a rampage. I had to admire Larry (Lawrence E.) Murray and the chances he took to get tank D-11 secured again. He took plenty of chances, many more than I did.

EDWARD G. RIZKALLA, Company C

Our LST was rocking so bad they had to let go overboard the drums of high octane gas on topside. What I remember most about that storm were the latrines, and even the decks, about a foot deep in vomit. Men with twenty years of sea duty were seasick.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

The morning of January 12 found us alone. The storm had broken up the convoy, and it was noon before we were back in formation. On January 13 we ran the tanks for fifteen minutes. Days now were spent belting up ammunition for the machine guns, working on the tanks, reading, singing, talking, or just waiting for chow.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

On January 15 I saw my second burial at sea. A sailor who had been stricken with appendicitis on this ship was transferred to a destroyer for medical treatment, but they couldn't save him. The burial took place from the destroyer, but we were close enough to see it fairly well. It was a very military and impressive ceremony.

One of the fellows in my squad had the measles. It was a puzzle to me how he got measles aboard ship.

ROBERT L. CONRAD, Company B

The man with appendicitis was transferred to another ship. The ride on a bosun's chair is an adventure for the healthiest person around. A sick person being transferred is at the mercy of the whimsical sea, which can be a merciless monster. Right or wrong, the doctor knew the man couldn't survive unless he was operated on, so the decision was made in spite of the rough seas. His trip over was like the wildest amusement park ride you could imagine. The line would go slack, drop him within a foot or two of the water, then snap taut and flick him up maybe twenty feet. The unfortunate fact is that, in spite of the good intentions of the Navy, peritonitis set in and the poor soul didn't make it anyway. The next morning we were all "called to" for our second burial at sea. We hadn't even reached Hawaii and already we had buried two men, in what was not even considered a combat zone. Quite unabashedly I felt tears rolling down my cheeks. For both funerals, however, I was very glad that I was not the one wrapped in the canvas.

JAMES C. CHANDLER, Company B

The morning after the storm I turned in to sick bay with measles. The doctor ran eighteen men out of a compartment and put me in isolation. The room was so dark I could tell day from night only by the way the bulkhead heated and cooled. I was still in isolation when we were in Hawaii and got out only a week or so before the landing in the Marshall Islands.

ROBERT L. CONRAD, Company B

Because many of us were sleeping topside and were leaving the frigid portions of the U.S.A. behind us and nearing the Tropic of Cancer, the weather was becoming very enjoyable. Perhaps I'll never have an experience quite like that again, in part because I'll never be that young again and, too, the fact that it was so unique. Lying there topside before falling asleep, gazing at the stars, was a truly mesmerizing experience. Our passage was under blackout, and quiet, so it was as though I was lost in space. It was easy and fun to pick out the big and little dipper, but I felt so cheated that I had no background in astronomy. What I knew was as a drop of water in the ocean. It was truly magnificent! During the day the thrill of seeing flying fish for the first time, and even whales on two occasions, changed the earlier part of the voyage into a *tropical vacation*.

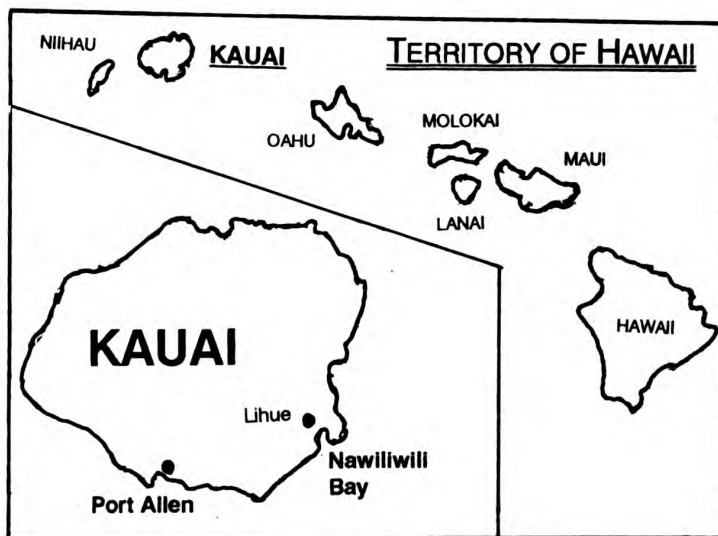
KAUAI

Our first sighting of land was on January 15, of islands in the Hawaiian chain. All ships put into ports on the Hawaiian island of Kauai, but not all together. Some docked in the harbor in Nawiliwili Bay, others at Port Allen, some twenty miles away by land. Most docked on Sunday, the 16th, but a few not until the next day. In general, the men were awestruck at their first sight of the lush tropical beauty of Kauai's beaches and mountains. The layover at Kauai was for three days, in which repairs were made for the storm damage, mail was received, and some very limited activities ashore were permitted. The nature and amount of shore activity varied by company and ship.

The most important development in that layover was the receipt by the Battalion officers of orders revealing that our objective for the operation was the seizure of islands in the northern part of Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands. It was symptomatic of the haste with which the Marshalls invasion was planned and executed that these orders should have arrived so late, when we were already *en route* to the target. Beginning in August 1943, the Marshalls plans had been debated and several times revised. Not till October 12, was Kwajalein definitely selected as the target. Not till January 5, 1944, was the final plan for the operation (VAC OP Plan 1-44) issued. By that time it was too late for operations orders to be delivered to the First Armored and other units before they left San Diego aboard LSTs on January 6.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

We finally reached land. LST 43 and other ships in the convoy anchored in a calm and beautiful harbor in Nawiliwili Bay on Kauai. Due to its high mountains, the island was visible from a very long distance out at sea. Kauai was a more beautiful island than I ever expected to see. On both sides of our harbor were high towering mountains, covered with green vegetation and summits shrouded with fleecy clouds. There were sugar cane fields scattered throughout the island, with coconuts, pine-apples, and bananas growing in abundance. The roads were narrow, but hard surfaced, and they wound up and down the mountain sides. Everything was green, with thick foliage, grass, and shrubbery. Coconut trees and beautiful colored flowers fringed the mountains and road sides. The town of Lihue was close by. I saw churches and schools, and once some children coming from school barefoot and wearing gas masks at their sides.

**LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander**

A few days after our arrival at Nawiliwili our orders arrived, and for the first time we knew what our mission was to be. With a communication plan in hand it was necessary to set up the vehicle radios on the correct frequencies. This could not be done in the bowels of the steel ships, and the commanding officer of the troops, a senile colonel, would not allow us to disembark to accomplish the task. Between that stupidity and the fact that the radios were not protected from sea water, we had little or no communication during the operation. The only light touch to our layover in Kauai was the Army MPs dropping by to inform us where the houses of prostitution were.

DONALD C. HOUSTON, Company B

On the trip over to Kauai my tank was one of those damaged when they broke loose on the tank deck because of the storm. We had to go to the local garage at Nawiliwili Harbor. We slept on the beach with our tanks, and the next morning Bill (William D.) Cathcart and I decided we would go find some coconuts. Real early, around 0600, we were picking some up in a front yard, when a woman stuck her head out of an upstairs window and asked in a loud voice, "Are you finding any good ones,

boys?" With both our jackets full, we replied, "Oh sure, plenty." In traveling the short distance to the local garage we had to cross a small bridge with coral walls on both sides. There were only inches to spare, and someone (not I) turned a little too quickly and broke off the end of one wall with one of the tank tracks. I guess we created quite a stir in the village, as we were the first military convoy to go there. In 1977 it was my privilege to return, with my late wife, to the same location. We had dinner in a 20-story hotel on the edge of the harbor.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

On the second day on Kauai we drove six tanks off LST 43 so they could be straightened out and chained down right. We parked them on a beach across the harbor and soon found a store nearby where I bought cokes and pies—real good because we hadn't had cold drinks since leaving the States. I had a chance to look about the island a little with a couple of buddies. That night a guard was placed on the tanks, but as there were about fifteen of us on guard, our watches didn't last very long. We slept in the open and, even with a couple of blankets, it got a little chilly toward morning. The next day we boarded the LST again and spent some time dogging the tanks and making them secure for the trip ahead.

ROBERT L. CONRAD, Company B

When we arrived in Hawaii on January 16, I felt very pleased that I was the first member of our family to have visited such an exotic American possession. Kauai was, and is, magnificent and, although we would have liked staying longer, some was better than none. We attended mass on the beach and received communion. Having come from a religious family, I felt very good about that.

GEORGE LEGINO, Company B

At Nawiliwili three or four of us decided to go look for bananas even though the area was off limits. We were picked up by Army MPs in a jeep and were being escorted back. I whispered to my friends, "On the count of three, jump!" We did, rolled down a hill, and escaped back to our ship. The MPs came looking for us, but we were nowhere to be found. We managed to get back with some of the green bananas.

In later life my wife and I visited the Nawiliwili harbor several times, had dinner at Club Jerry overlooking the harbor, and relived those days in 1944.

WILLIAM MOIR, Company D

At Nawiliwili a few fellows and I pretended to be a work party and had no trouble getting ashore, nor later getting back aboard. We didn't really do anything, for it was dark and there was no place to go. But we enjoyed the idea that by sneaking ashore we were getting away with something.

DALE L. BARKER, Company D

On Monday, January 17, we received mail and were given time ashore for organized recreation—swimming, ball, buying ice cream and fruit juices. On Tuesday many of us washed clothes on the dock, then spent more time ashore. In the afternoon I was given radio call signs, radio frequencies, and other signal information to be passed along to radio operators and others for the coming operations. Communication chiefs in the other four companies must have received the same information, but there was no way for any of us to determine if we had our radios tuned accurately to the newly assigned frequencies.

DONALD L. FERCHAU, Company A

Company A docked at Port Allen on Kauai, the garden isle of the Hawaiians. It was beautiful beyond belief, and luckily we were given free time to take care of things or just go ashore and watch the natives. One of the sights Whitey (Thomas I.) Coleman and I saw was one of the islanders searching among the rocks around the dock. He pulled out an octopus, bit it between the eyes, and threw it aside to search for more.

Thirty-four years later I returned to that spot with my wife, Helen. All we found was a rusted piling, the last remnant of the wharf at which our LSTs had docked. The little town of Hanapepe, adjacent to Port Allen, remained pretty much the same.

ROBERT W. PIERCE, Company A

At Port Allen we were given permission to swim off the bow of the ship in the harbor. Some of the Marines were excellent swimmers and divers, and used the bow of the ship for a diving platform. The second day we marched to a park on the island for R & R. We were given a beer ration (2 cans), played ball, and otherwise stretched our legs. The convoy took a couple of days taking on stores and fuel, and we were again ready to set sail.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

We played football on a large lot near the harbor. In 1973 my family and I made a trip to Kauai and to Nawiliwili. You wouldn't recognize Kauai as we saw it then with its high-rise hotels, good roads, etc. Where we played football in 1944, there now stood large trees and nearby a restaurant called the "Oar House."

ROBERT L. CONRAD, Company B

Dole Foods had a processing plant on Kauai and, knowing we were going somewhere into combat, they presented us with washtubs full of sliced pineapple. We were allowed all we could carry. With the hole in the middle, the slices seated very nicely on my bayonet, so I had a foot of that delectable fruit to consume at my discretion. (I didn't eat any pineapple for many years after that.) One of my topside bunkies purchased a stalk of bananas, so we missed mess call several times.

APPROACH TO KWAJALEIN

Flotilla no. 1 put to sea from Kauai on Wednesday afternoon, January 19, Flotilla no. 2 the next day. The first evening on some ships, early the next morning on others, the troops were assembled and told that their destination was Kwajalein Atoll, that D-Day would be January 31, and H-Hour would be 0900. Throughout the approach to Kwajalein officers held school, with maps, photos, and charts, to identify and describe the targeted islands and to lay out in detail the enemy defenses, estimated enemy strength, landing plans, and other aspects of the invasion. The islands were usually referred to, not by their official geographic names, but by code names such as Burlesque and Camouflage for the largest islands, Roi and Namur, and Ivan, Jacob, Allen, and Albert for smaller islands. All equipment and supplies—tanks, fuel, weapons, ammunition, radios, and personal gear—were made combat-ready. Traveling west across the International Date Line, the convoy moved directly from January 26 to the 28th, losing Thursday, January 27. We would not regain that lost day for another 22 months.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

On January 19 we drove the tanks aboard the LST and dogged them down to make them secure for the trip ahead. When our ship left Kauai at 1600, I watched the island fade away in the distance, wondering if I would see it again. After evening chow, we had muster on the bow of the ship and were told when and where we were going into combat. Our destination was the Marshalls, and our outfit would make three landings in two days, first on two small islands, and the next day on a larger one.

In the next twelve days I did gun watches, calisthenics, and spent time topside getting a tan, but mostly we had inspections, worked at squaring away ammunition and the tanks, and getting school on weapons and the landings. The Lieutenant went over the plans for the landing of the first platoon. Everyone was anxiously waiting.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

The next few days were spent in semaphore, machine gun, etc., and much time was taken up going over the coming operation. Not much resistance was expected from either of the two small islands we were to hit the first day. Camouflage (Namur), the larger island, was where trouble was expected. Operations maps showed numerous installations, including coast defense guns, antiaircraft guns, machine guns, blockhouses, pillboxes, numerous antitank trenches, rifle trenches, and barbed wire. We did a lot of work on the tanks, keeping the tank itself, the 37mm gun, the machine guns and small arms in tiptop shape. The weather became warmer day after day. We had exercise every day topside, and rifle inspection every now and then. On the 26th we were informed that we were then in dangerous waters. Each man stood gun watch every other day, and a sharp lookout for subs and planes was kept constantly.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

We left Kauai at 1630 on January 19 and the next day were told our destination. We had school on our landing tactics, and were told the supporting Naval forces were listed as 14 battleships, 13 cruisers, 87 destroyers, 18 aircraft carriers, 600 aircraft (land-based and carrier-based), 54 LSTs, and a large number of gunboats, troopships, and cargo ships.

We crossed the International Date Line on my birthday, January 27. On the 29th we gassed up the tanks and got our ammunition ready, and on the 30th, the day before D-Day, I attended a church service.

ROBERT W. PIERCE, Company A

As soon as we left Kauai we were told that our destination was the Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands. We would be landing on Roi and Namur Islands. We had a number of briefings and were shown detailed maps of the beach and coral reefs.

The LST's troop quarters were a little crowded. Bunk beds, hinged off the bulkhead, were stacked three high. We had shaving gear, towels, and a change of clothing in the quarters. Other personal needs were in our combat packs aboard the tanks. The ship's mess hall was available after evening chow for us to play cards. Some of the popular card games were pinochle, five hundred, euchre and, of course, poker. Some Marines read or played checkers or chess. We took physical exercises on deck. Weather permitting, some Marines slept on their bedrolls on the deck of the ship. We showered in salt water using salt water soap. Fresh water was conserved for drinking and cooking though I believe the crew used fresh water for showering on a rationed basis. In the evening some of the Marines would gather on the bow of the ship topside and pray the rosary. The flagship would transmit the daily news by blinker light to the nearest LST, which would in turn relay it ship by ship to the rest of the convoy. The Marine CPs would sometimes sharpen their code skills by copying the signals. The ship radioman would later post the news on a bulletin board for all to see.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

When we left Kauai and our destination was revealed, I gave serious thought for the first time about having to go into combat. I'll admit that I was somewhat frightened at the prospect. What really helped me was my trust in God and the fact that I was with my very good buddies. I don't remember very much about the routines aboard the LST except that it was combat loaded and very crowded. We spent some time being shown where we were going and how the operation was going to be approached. Lieutenant Milton B. Curtis, our platoon leader, spent some time detailing our part in the operation. We also did exercise almost daily on the deck of the LST. There wasn't much room, and it was quite difficult to find a spot to sit and relax on deck. Down below in the sleeping quarters it was crowded and hot. A most uncomfortable situation. Not having enough fresh water aboard we took saltwater showers using an ugly-looking brown soap. The

salt water was warm though. The "head" was a small compartment with a long urinal-looking affair with water running through it. If I remember correctly, it had a form of toilet seat arrangement that would accommodate about six men at a time. Oh well, when you gotta go, you gotta go. Who cares about privacy?

EARL M. HILL, *Company B*

Back on Kauai the Navy had brought aboard a huge supply of fruit cocktail, packaged in one-gallon tin cans within cardboard cartons. Supplies of this delicacy, irresistible to voracious Marines incited by monotonous Navy shipboard chow, were stored on the LST's aft tank deck platform. During the Kauai-Kwajalein segment of the voyage, a considerable quantity of fruit cocktail mysteriously disappeared from storage. Searches of am tanks and other suspected places of concealment were conducted, but to no avail. One of the unsolved mysteries of the Pacific War.

Promptly after the departure of our convoy from Kauai, we were informed of the plan for our invasion of Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands. Our troops continued to live in whatever nooks and crannies aboard LST 122 were available: inside and atop am tanks, under shelter halves on deck, or wherever space to sack out could be found. We studied the invasion plans and worked diligently to make our equipment as combat-ready as possible. There was a certain amount of Bible reading.

CHAPTER

FIVE

Kwajalein: The First Test

Our objective in that January of 1944 was some small reef-bound islands in the Kwajalein Atoll of the Marshall Islands. Kwajalein is one of 32 atolls which, with hundreds of separate tiny islets, make up the Marshall Islands. Some 2000 miles from Pearl Harbor and not far north of the equator, the Marshalls comprise two parallel chains of islands, the Ratak (sunrise) chain to the east and the Ralik (sunset) chain to the west. Though the Marshalls stretch over an expanse of ocean greater than the area of Texas, the total land area is only 69 square miles. The atolls, however, enclose 4500 square miles in their lagoons, some of which offer good anchorage for ships. Nowhere does land in the Marshalls rise more than 20 feet above sea level. The native population is about 20,000 and speak Marshallese, a Micronesian language. The major atolls are Mille, Majuro, Maloelap, and Wotje in the eastern chain, and Jaluit, Eniwetok, and Kwajalein in the western chain.

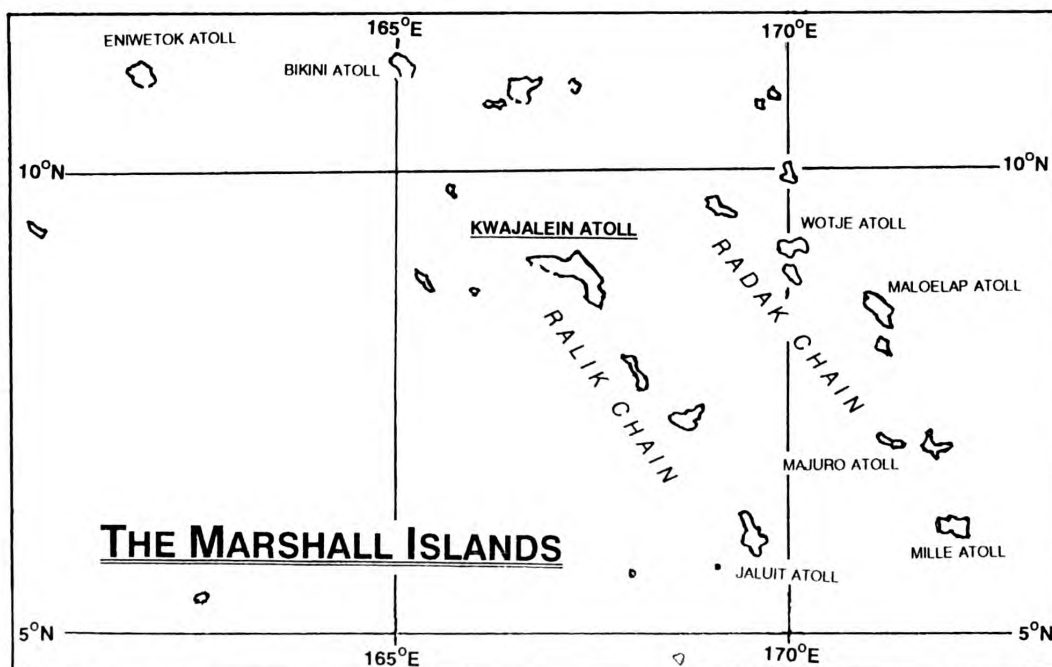
The first discovery of the Marshall Islands by Europeans was probably a sighting by the Spanish explorer, Alvaro de Saavedra in 1529. The Marshall and Gilbert Islands were named for two English sea captains who explored both groups in 1788. Germany claimed the Marshalls in 1885 and purchased all rights to them from Spain in 1899. Japan in World War I was an Allied power. In 1914, she seized the Marshalls and other islands from Germany and, in 1920, was granted a League of Nations mandate over them. Japan left the League of Nations in 1935 and, claiming absolute sovereignty, constructed naval and air bases in the islands. To keep their military buildup secret, the Japanese expelled all Europeans. In 1943 Japanese airfields and anchorages in the Marshalls were part of the outer defenses of the empire.

Kwajalein, the largest atoll in the Marshalls, is also the largest atoll in the world. Its ring of islets and reefs enclose a huge lagoon 78 miles long and some 655 square miles in area, with anchorage sufficient to shelter large fleets of ships. The principal islands are Kwajalein Island at the southern end of the atoll and Roi and Namur to the north. The Japanese had built airstrips on Roi and had begun construction of a 5000-foot strip on Kwajalein Island. From their Kwajalein bases they had made air and naval strikes against American forces. In U.S. hands these same bases could be used just as effectively in reverse.

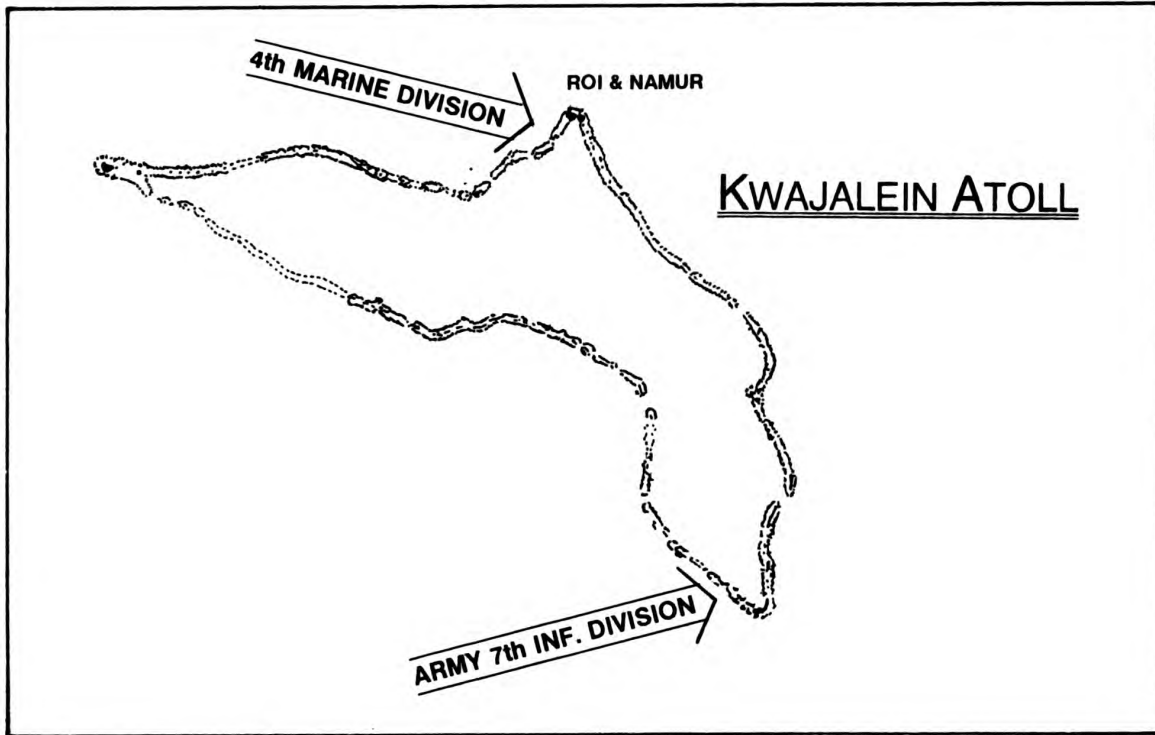
THE CENTRAL PACIFIC OFFENSIVE

The seizure in November 1943 of Tarawa and other atolls in the Gilbert Islands was only the first step in the Navy's Central Pacific drive toward Japan. Using the newly won harbors and airfields in the Gilberts, the logical next move was to occupy the Marshalls and take over Japanese bases there. From the Marshalls the war could be carried to the Carolinas and Marianas, and thence, ultimately, to Japan itself. The code name for the Marshalls operation was FLINTLOCK.

The choice of which atolls in the Marshalls should be taken first did not come easily. Plans in October 1943 and through November called for almost simultaneous seizure of Wotje, Maloelap, and Kwajalein. Not till mid-December were Kwajalein and Majuro Atolls finally settled on as the targets for invasion. Nimitz's subordinate admirals and generals thought that attacking Kwajalein alone was too risky. They favored targets



in the Radak Chain, closer to U.S. bases in the Gilberts. But Nimitz, as Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet, overruled them and chose the bolder course of seizing Kwajalein, farther west, in the heart of the Ralik Chain. So Kwajalein Atoll it was, with Majuro as a collateral objective.

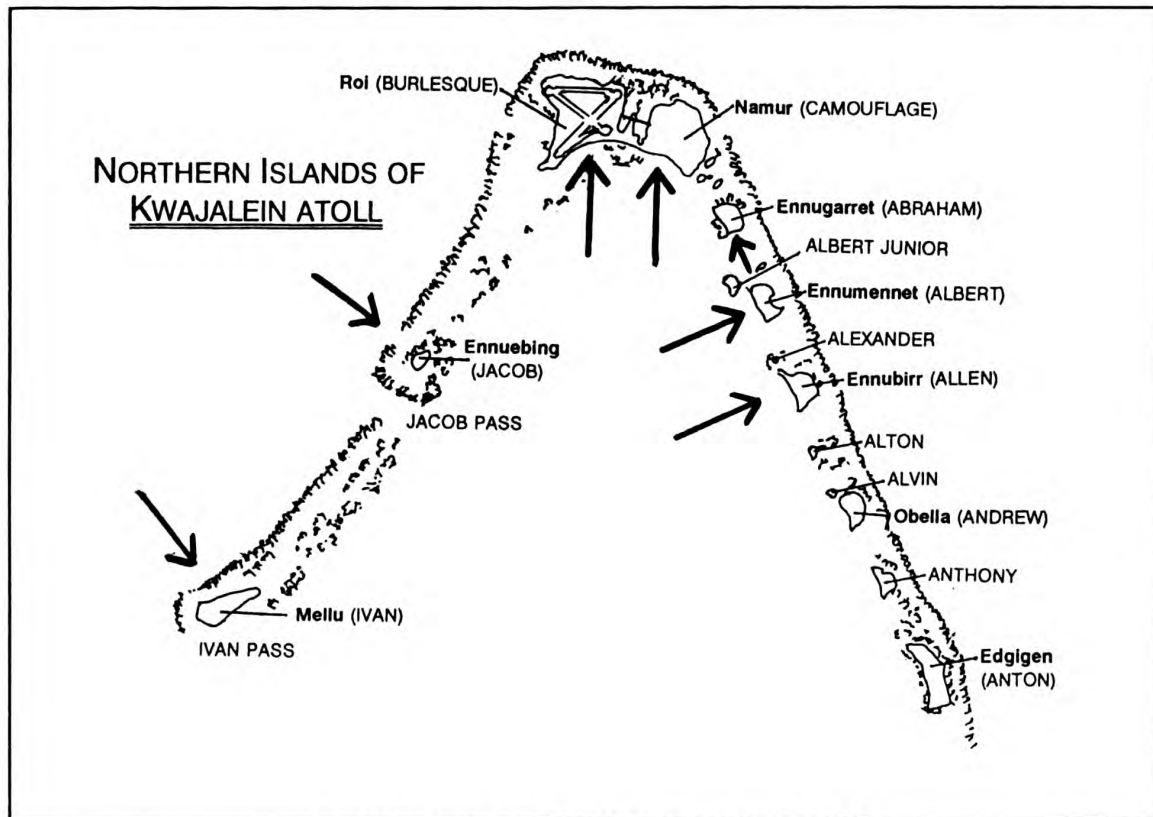


To the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) in Washington and Admiral Chester W. Nimitz in Pearl Harbor, it was imperative that the offensive momentum be maintained, and the enemy kept off-balance. The next strike, therefore, had to be made as soon after Tarawa as possible. Sound as this strategy was, it adversely affected efficiency and was costly in men and matériel. Among combatants the pressure of deadlines raised the level of confusion and personal strain in all ranks. The departure of the LST convoys without operations orders was one indication of the haste with which FLINTLOCK was prosecuted. The First Armored went into battle without an opportunity to tune its radios to the assigned frequencies. New amtanks, replacements for those lost in the San Clemente maneuvers, assaulted beaches with 37mm cannons that had not been test-fired. Though the First Armored and the 4th Marine Division were new organizations with little enough time for training, the situation for amphibian tractor units was much worse. On December 4, only a month before departure overseas, the 4th Amphibian Tractor Battalion was split to create two new units, the 10th Amphibian Tractor Battalion and Company A of the 11th Amphibian Tractor Battalion.

PREINVASION ACTIONS

The logistical operations and supporting actions prior to invasion were on an epic scale. Troops, ships, and supplies had to be assembled from California, Oahu, Samoa, and other widely spread parts of the Pacific. Because of difficulties in bringing shipping and matériel together, D-Day was twice postponed, from January 1 to the 17th, then to January 31. To protect invasion forces it was necessary to neutralize Japanese air and naval strongholds throughout the Marshalls. Beginning early in December 1943, Japanese harbors and air bases at Wotje, Maloelap, Mille, Jaluit, Eniwetok, and other atolls—and of course Kwajalein itself—were repeatedly pounded by carrier- and land-based bombers. The land planes were B-24s from airfields on Tarawa and other atolls in the Gilbert and Ellice groups.

The Japanese were at first able to strike back against American naval vessels and air bases, but their strength deteriorated rapidly. Leaving defensive land forces at their major bases, the enemy withdrew major naval and air units to Truk and to the Marianas.



INITIAL TARGETS, NORTHERN LANDING FORCE

D-Day, H-Hour 0900: IVAN & JACOB. **A-Hour 1130:** ALLEN & ALBERT. **B-Hour 1600:** ABRAHAM.
D-plus-1, W-Hour 1000: Roi & Namur.

By D-Day, with planes and landing fields destroyed, the Japanese had completely lost control of the air over the Marshalls.

On January 29, D-minus-2, U.S. carriers and battleships moved in to bombard several Japanese bases, but most intensely Roi, Namur, and Kwajalein in the Kwajalein Atoll. Their targets were the runways, hangars, gun emplacements, blockhouses, and other defenses and facilities on the islands.

THE BATTLE PLAN

Three simultaneous assaults in the Marshalls were planned for D-Day, January 31, 1944, to be executed by three Naval attack forces and three separate landing forces. Lightly defended Majuro Atoll was to be taken by a small force consisting of a Marine reconnaissance company and an Army infantry battalion. The Army 7th Infantry Division (reinforced) was designated the Southern Landing Force, with Kwajalein Island and its air base as its primary objective. The Northern Landing Force consisted of the 4th Marine Division (reinforced) which was to seize Roi and Namur with their air strips and facilities. On D-Day both the Northern and Southern Landing Forces were to occupy tiny islets guarding the larger islands, and then, on the second day, attack the main targets.

Navy Task Force 53, designated the Northern Attack Force, was commanded by Rear Admiral Richard L. Conolly. Counting ships of all types, from carriers and battleships to mine sweepers and sub chasers, Task Force 53 was an armada of 83 ships. The Marine's 4th Division was commanded by Major General Harry Schmidt and consisted of three infantry regiments (the 23d, 24th, and 25th Marines) and an artillery regiment (the 14th Marines), plus smaller units. Attached to the Division were the First Armored Amphibian Battalion, the 4th and 10th Amphibious Tractor Battalions, Company A of the 11th Amphibious Tractor Battalion, and various other units.

Quite aside from problems of sea and surf and from obstacles the enemy might offer, the northern assault plan was complex. Experience painfully gained at Tarawa taught the tactical advantage of first occupying small outlying islets before attacking the main objectives. Five such tiny islands were targeted for D-Day. Mellu (code-named IVAN) and Ennuebing (JACOB), guarding entrances to the lagoon, were to be taken from the ocean side as the first targets of D-Day morning. After IVAN and JACOB Passes had been swept of mines, the way would be clear for ships and troops to move into the lagoon for a lagoon-side assault on Ennumennet (ALBERT) and Ennubirr (ALLEN). In late afternoon troops were to cross from Ennumennet to seize Ennugarret (ABRAHAM). With these islands neutralized and with artillery emplaced on them, the assault against Roi and Namur would be made on the morning of the second day, D-plus-1. After Roi and Namur were secured, cleanup of other small islands nearby could proceed.

The task of taking the five small islands on D-Day was assigned to the 25th Marines. On the second day the 23d Marines would land on Roi, the 24th Marines on

NORTHERN LANDING FORCE, KWAJALEIN, D-DAY (31 JAN 1944)

Ennuebing = JACOB = Beach Blue 1

H-Hour: 0900, then 0930. Landing: 0952.
 Infantry: Co. B, 1/25 (= *Co. B, 1st Bn of 25th Marines*).
 First Armored: 2 platoons (12 amtanks) of Co. B.
 Artillery emplaced: 3/14.

Mellu = IVAN = Beach Blue 2

H-Hour: 0900, then 0930.
 Two landings: 0955 by Co. B, 4/25; 1015 by Co. C, 1/25.
 Infantry: Co. C, 1/25, and Co. B, 4/25.
 First Armored: Amtanks of Co. B and/or D.
 Artillery emplaced: 4/14.

Ennumennet = ALBERT = Beach Blue 3

A-Hour: 1130, then 1430, then 1500.
 Landing: 1510. Secured: 1542.
 Infantry: 3/25.
 First Armored: Amtanks of Co. B and/or D
 Artillery emplaced: 2/14.

Ennubirr = ALLEN = Beach Blue 4

A-Hour: 1130, then 1430, then 1500.
 Landing: 1520. Secured: 1628.
 Infantry: 2/25.
 First Armored: Amtanks of Co. B and/or D.
 Artillery emplaced: 1/14.

Ennugarret = ABRAHAM = Beach Blue 5

B-Hour: 1600, then 1800. Landing: 1830. Secured: 1915.
 Infantry: 3/25.
 First Armored: Amtank(s) of Co. B.

Obella = ANDREW (not a primary target)

Landing: 1545. Secured: 1628.
 Infantry: One platoon of Co. G, 2/25
 First Armored: 5 amtanks.

ALBERT JR. (Not a primary target)

Infantry: One platoon from 3/25.

Namur. Companies B and D of the First Armored would lead the assaults against the small islands on D-Day and against Namur on D-plus-1. Companies A and C were assigned to the assault on Roi on D-plus-1.

Since the First Armored line companies were isolated from their own Battalion command, with amtank companies and platoons distributed to company- and battalion-size units of infantry, it is now very difficult to distinguish from each other the actions of specific First Armored units. We know that Companies B and D led the runs to the beaches of JACOB and IVAN, but it is not at all clear which of these companies, or which of their platoons, hit which island. Neither the available official records nor the recollections of the men involved tell us exactly which amtanks operated against which target beaches. The official histories state that two platoons of Company B led the assault on JACOB. From the personal accounts of the men, it is certain that some Company D, and likely that some Company B, amtanks were involved in the IVAN landings.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

The Commanding General of the 4th Marine Division attached the four line companies of the First Armored to the infantry regiments, which meant the regimental commanders took complete control of First Armored companies and all their equipment and supplies. This attachment of armor, rather than to have the units placed in support, was contrary to all accepted doctrine. As a result the First Armored Amphibian Battalion headquarters was ignored during the entire operation. No provision had been made for the three LVTAs of the Battalion headquarters company in either the operation or landing plan, nor in fact, did I command the four line companies.

THE IVAN AND JACOB LANDINGS

The month-long bombing and strafing by air, and the intense two-day naval bombardment just before D-Day, had annihilated the air and sea defenses of Roi and Namur. The Japanese, however, still had strong dug-in beach defenses and considerable fire power ashore. On D-Day, January 31, 1944, the fury of attack by Admiral Conolly's Northern Attack Force rose to a new high with the object of destroying at short range all remaining shore defenses and of covering the landings by Marines. At 0651 on D-Day the battleships, cruisers, and destroyers opened up with saturation fire, each ship having specifically assigned target areas. With first light, planes roared off carrier decks and at 0715 delivered their first strikes against the defenses of Roi and Namur.

DEBARKATION

Breakfast aboard most ships was at about 0130. What kind of breakfast depended on the level of hospitality on each ship. Some, but not all, LSTs served First Armored men steak and eggs, a growing tradition for pre-landing breakfasts. The hour of debar-

kation seems to have varied from 0330 to 0630, but always before daylight. Lumbering off the LSTs into a dark sea, the am tanks of Companies B and D churned away toward assigned lines of departure, either for Ennuebing (JACOB) or for Mellu (IVAN). Companies A and C were to remain aboard ship until the second day. Dawn revealed the mighty armada arrayed for the invasion—the fire-support ships blasting targets ashore, and the transports and landing ships disgorging men and landing craft. LCVPs were ferrying infantry from the transports to points where they could transfer to LVTs for the trip across the reef. A brisk east wind and a rough sea cut the speed of LVTs and LVTAs to half but, more seriously, they also hampered and slowed down the transfer of troops from LCVPs to LVTs. Delay and confusion became so great that H-Hour had to be moved from 0900 to 0930.

BYRON G. SNEVA, Company C

On D-Day, January 31, with LST 119 within five miles of shore, everybody was topside watching one of the greatest shellings ever taking place. Battlewagons and other ships were firing their big guns. A lot of carriers were sitting out on the horizon. It was a great show to watch the dive-bombers tear down and smash the island to pieces. We could not see much defense of any sort. The whole island was burning.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

I don't think anyone slept the night before the D-Day landing. Most of the boys stood on the side talking and watching the gun flashes of the Naval bombardment. Chow call went at 0130, and we left the ship at 0630.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

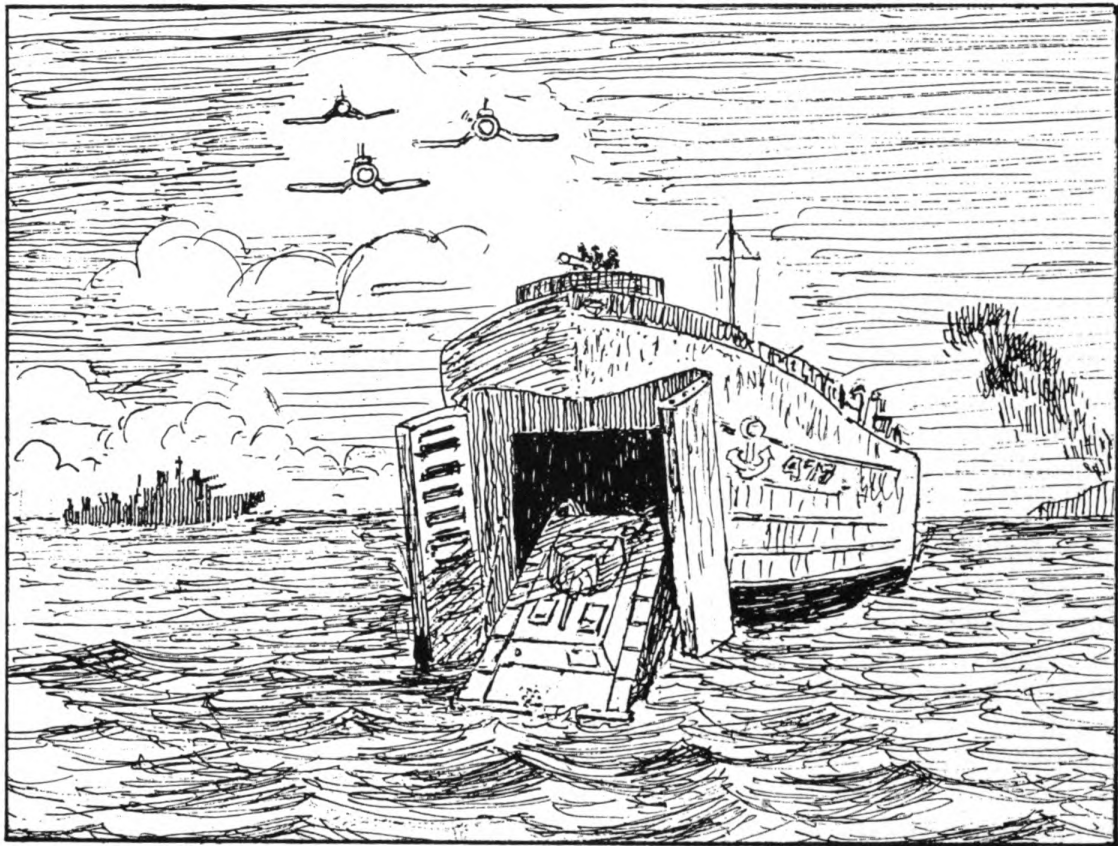
Our hosts aboard LST 122 served its Marine passengers steak and eggs before opening the bow doors, lowering the ramp, and discharging Company B's am tanks and crews outside the reef off small islands southwest of Namur.

WILLIAM MOIR, Company D

We drove the tanks off the LST at 0400. It was pitch black; you couldn't see your nose in front of your face. When dawn came I saw a really sensational sight—more ships and planes than you could count. As the shape of the islands came into view, the bombing started. For the Japs it was pitiful. I don't see how anyone could have lived through it. I thought those islands would sink after all that shelling. They kept it up and kept it up.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

The day arrived when we would finally do what we were trained to do as Marines—hit the beach. It was 31 January 1944. I remember being in my assigned position in tank D-11, hatch closed, and going down the LST ramp. The ramp was quite



Down the ramp. An LVTA-1 debarks from an LST. (Sketch by Stephen Marusky)

steep, and we were very heavily loaded. My thought was, "I hope we don't keep going straight down." As it came out, we hit the water, went under for a few seconds, came up, bobbed about, and headed for the line of departure, a few thousand yards from the shore. I have to say that Larry (Lawrence E.) Murray was a damn good driver.

ROBERT L. CONRAD, Company B

Our tank, B-16, was the first one to be launched, right in front of the bow doors. After the 0130 chow call, I told the crew that I would be lying on the 55-gallon drums that were lashed down on the topside deck, immediately adjacent to the access ladder. (To this very moment I do not know what those drums contained. It could have been aviation gasoline for all I knew, which would have made it not the smartest place in the world to be.) The hours-long "Fourth of July entertainment" we had been watching was wearing thin, and I couldn't keep awake, especially after that neat chow. My notes show that we were scheduled to disembark at 0330, but I was sleeping on the drums and no one could find me. When I awoke because of the rumbling noise of the tanks leaving, I panicked. There has never been a swabby who negotiated a ladder in more rapid fashion than I did that morning. When I arrived on the well deck, about one-third of

the tanks assigned to LST 222 had departed. Knowing mine was in the water, I thought I would jump in and swim to B-16. I went up the ladder and to the port topside rail and found, much to my dismay, that the blackness was so intense I couldn't see the water. So, back down to the well deck, where Lieutenant "Swampy" (Calvin E.) McClain from our company (from Louisiana, I believe; later killed in action) was directing the few remaining tanks in their debarkation. I yelled to him that I had missed my tank and asked if I could go out on one of his. He agreed, and my heart began to settle down close to its home base once again. I had been having visions of growing the white whiskers I now have in the Naval prison at Mare Island, as a deserter. We floated around in the darkness for about three hours of eternity. When dawn broke, I was taken to my own tank and received with a very cold response. Our company CO, Lieutenant Edgar S. Carlson, was riding in our tank, and he couldn't imagine how anyone could sleep through all that was going on. No wonder: he was an old guy—about 26—and those old folks get nervous about a lot of things.

DALE L. BARKER, Company D

On LST 121 a Company D headquarters group stayed aboard for various assignments. George S. Stevens, John T. Evans, and I made up a radio watch team manning the jeep radio to maintain 24-hour liaison with D Company amtanks. Gunnery Sergeants George R. Borstell and John W. Frye, and Mess Sergeant Edward A. Trosper were on gun watches. Company D officers who stayed aboard were Lieutenant Theodore A. Burge (the Company Exec) and Warrant Officer Edward A. Yates.

THE LANDING PLAN

First Armored amtanks lined up as well as rough seas permitted to form two lines of departure, one for Ennuebing (JACOB) and one for Mellu (IVAN). They were participating in a landing plan that would become the standard for future amphibious landings in the Central Pacific war. When bombardment by the Navy's big guns was lifted and strikes by carrier-based bombers ended, the little LCI(G)s would then move forward to the edge of the coral reef and continue the fire against the beaches. The last Naval vessels to work the target beaches, LCI(G)s (Landing Craft, Infantry—Gunboats) were heavily armed, usually with 3-inch, 20mm and 40mm guns, .50-caliber machine guns, and rocket launchers. At a signal from the control craft, and guided by guide boats, the LVTAs churned their way 5,000 yards down the designated lanes, following the rocket-firing LCIs. As those craft turned away, the LVTAs continued the attack, followed by the subsequent waves of amtracs carrying the assault units of infantry. As these waves advanced toward the objective, Naval gunfire and carrier-based aircraft continued to pound the beach area. As the amphibious assault neared the beach, the Naval gunfire shifted inland to other targets, and the 37mm guns and machine guns of the LVTAs commenced firing. First Armored gunners were to fire at whatever targets presented themselves—enemy defensive positions, gun emplacements, snipers. Their mission was

to destroy as much as possible of whatever was left of enemy resistance, and to keep the enemy's head down until the troop-laden amtracs could deposit infantry on the beach in positions of best advantage.

THE RUN TO THE BEACH

The landings on Ennuebing (JACOB) and Mellu (IVAN) that morning were the first experience by First Armored amtank crews at crossing a coral reef. They also experienced the force of a heavy, dangerous surf. The tiny islets themselves were lightly defended, for the Japanese had pulled most of their troops onto the main islands of Roi and Namur. For both the amtanks and amtracs, it was the surf, and not the platoon-size garrison of defenders, that made the D-Day morning landings costly in men and equipment.

Though the surf was rough in the approaches to both islets, it was much worse for IVAN than for JACOB. The 2d and 3d Platoons of Company D, in their attempt to land on IVAN, suffered the worst losses. Tank D-10 capsized in the crashing surf, and its tank commander, Eddie A. Williams, and one of its machine gunners, Barney J. Edmonson, were drowned. Tanks D-14 and D-18 broke down. D-14 was restarted, but lost its radio operator, Robert Davis, who was drowned. D-18 was scuttled.

Company B, 1st Battalion of the 25th Marines was the first infantry ashore, landing on JACOB at 0952 hours and soon had the island secured. On IVAN, Company C of the same battalion could not reach shore because of capsizing and other problems which the amtracs of the 10th Amphibian Tractor Battalion were having in the surf. Company C of the 4th Battalion, 25th Marines, however, moved into IVAN Pass, found a more accessible beach, and went ashore on IVAN at 0955. Company C of the 1st Battalion, 25th Marines, then followed suit, and landed on that side of IVAN at 1015. Both islands were soon secured and a battery of artillery from the 14th Marines emplaced on each.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

Going into the beach I was plenty scared. Our target was a small island, covered with coconut trees and surrounded by coral. When the tank hit the coral it did quite a bit of bouncing around—my first time driving on coral. The 37mm and the machine guns opened fire at about 200 yards and kept firing all the way in. We had a little trouble with high surf, but met no opposition.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

Substituting for the Marine injured during the storm, I drove one of the Company B tanks. Our line of departure was to have been a dye marker laid by a destroyer, positioned so as to enable the amtanks to line up abreast of the ship and, when all vehicles were assembled, to proceed ashore in a skirmish line. The turbulent seas and the wretched maneuvering characteristics of the amtanks combined to make this ideal impossible. The tanks wallowed awkwardly from the LSTs to points near the dye marker

and, at the appointed time, attempted to maintain a course and speed to arrive on the beach at the time scheduled. Due to rough surf and anticipated hostile fire, the drivers' hatches had to be buttoned up. With his hatch closed, an amtank driver was virtually blind to the surrounding situation. His small periscope afforded only the narrowest of views under the best of conditions. With the vehicle bobbing, rolling and pitching in heavy surf, and waves washing over the 'scope, the driver was forced to rely on directions from the tank commander in the turret, or to make a daunting effort to hold a compass heading with the same handicaps.

Thanks to the Navy's heavy and sustained bombardment of these tiny islands, hostile fire on Day One was virtually nonexistent. My tank came ashore, as I recall, on a small island southwest of Namur with no damage from gunfire, but thoroughly saturated from unruly seas. A lone enemy sniper, perched among the fronds of a palm tree, was holding off a wave of infantry just behind my tank's position on the beach. Our tank commander, Corporal Ervin P. Bodewig, bore-sighted the 37mm gun on the top of the palm tree, loaded with an HE (high-explosive) round, and fired. One less sniper. Indeed, one less palm tree. I saw no other living enemy on that island.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

The first island was about 200 feet by 300 feet, covered with coconut trees and surrounded by coral. That was the first time the tanks had been on coral, and they took quite a bouncing. The surf was pretty high, and a few tanks rolled over and didn't make it. The 37mm and the machine guns opened up at about 200 yards and continued to fire all the way in. Very little, if any, opposition was met.

ROBERT L. CONRAD, Company B

About 0900 we started in. Being the 37 gunner, I had always felt very pleased that the periscopes were made by Honeywell. It was like a link to home, as the Honeywell plant was just a little over a mile from my home in Minneapolis. In addition, I knew a few people who worked there and always had it in the back of my head that someone I knew had assisted in the construction of my periscope. When we were told to button up and head in, I closed my hatch and said, "All set!" Before a minute had passed, my scope was so fogged I couldn't see *anything*. I opened my hatch carefully, hoping I would not have a finger or two blown off by a Jap .25 round, and wiped the outer glass with my hand. It was a wasted effort, as it refogged immediately. My thoughts by this time had gone back to the Honeywell plant. It must be infiltrated by fifth-columnists; our own people wouldn't do this to us. Lieutenant Carlson was acting in the capacity of ammunition passer, but as yet had passed nothing. He kept yelling from below, "*Fire that cannon!*" I refused, telling him that I couldn't see, and wouldn't fire until I could. That truly endeared our relationship. He was convinced I was a screw-up anyway, and now a screw-up who wouldn't take orders. That's the kind of stuff I was talking about: those old fellows get so pouty. He kept yelling, "I'll find someone who *will* fire the damned thing." It was just at this point that we felt this thud and a

tremendous crash. The tank commander, who was on my starboard in the turret, yelled, "We're hit!" That was good enough for me. I flipped my hatch cover to the open position and, as I started through the opening, squeezed the cartridge that inflated my life belt. It expanded so rapidly that my upper trunk was out of the hatch, but my lower extremities were held in by this huge "doughnut," which was preventing me from extricating the balance of my torso. If we had been hit by a shell, or smacked in the pontoon so that it fractured and allowed water to penetrate and flood, thus pulling us down to Davy Jones' locker, I wouldn't have had a chance. When the life belt inflated, it had gotten so tight I couldn't release it. It turned out that none of the troops using periscopes could see. We had collided with another tank directly in front of us. That was the target I would have creamed had I fired. From that time nothing more was said about finding someone else who could "fire the damned thing."

We had no idea what to expect, but our fears were without cause as the resistance was minimal. We were anxious to fight, or bluff, or do whatever would appropriately fit the situation. But there was no one to impress, either friend or foe. We secured for the morning and at about 1100 broke out the K rations for noon chow.

HOWARD VAN KESSEL, Company D

As we headed for the beach, I was manning a machine gun outside the turret. The surf was about ten feet high, greater than anything I had ever experienced. I never thought we would come in on a surf that severe and survive. The waves carried our tank forward and sent us toward shore like a surf board. Some of the others were not so fortunate.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

There was still shelling of the beach from the Navy guns. We started toward the beach, half scared, not knowing what to expect. If we arrived at the beach too soon, our own shells would hit us. If we were too slow or late, the enemy would have time to recover and start opposing us. So timing was probably the most important consideration at this point. About a minute or so before our landing, the Navy shelling lifted, and we were on our own. I fired the .30-caliber but, as the periscope was all wet, I could not get much of a view from it. I don't remember the surf being too bad, probably because I couldn't see much and was quite busy trying to keep my TCS radio dry. After a period of time, which seemed like minutes, but turned out to be a couple of hours, we came to an area along the beach and stopped the tank. I cautiously opened my hatch and looked out. There was not much going on, so I opened the hatch all the way and stood on my seat to have a look around. There was nothing but devastation: tree tops blown off, infantry taking up position, but no combat activity.

ROBERT B. WILSON, Company D

On the first morning of the Marshalls assault, the water was very rough, and we were bobbing around like corks. We were supposed to lead a detachment of infantry from the 4th division on some small islands, which might or might not be occupied by Jap troops. I was in tank D-16, and Lieutenant Robert E. McDowell was having a very heated discussion with an infantry officer who seemed to be questioning the feasibility of attempting a landing in such high surf. Lieutenant McDowell was standing on the catwalk in full battle gear when he suddenly slipped off the tank. Somehow he managed to catch hold of the radio antenna as he was going down, and held on as he went under. As heavily as he was weighted down, I doubt that he would have ever come back up if he hadn't caught hold of that long flexible antenna.

GEORGE F. ROBERTS, Company D

Our D-18, which I was driving, was supposed to support a landing on IVAN Island. Right after we went down the LST ramp to head for the Line of Departure, we broke a final drive and had power on only one track. We were drifting toward an island that hadn't been secured and, as we were a secret outfit not wishing to be captured, we hailed down an LCV. We put a thermite grenade in the breech of the 37mm cannon and another between the top two cylinders on the engine. The CP, Joe (Joseph C.) Baumbach, fired a carbine clip into his radio. The gunner, John E. "Jughead" Lindberg, took the "brain." We took the two .30-caliber machine guns, plus ammo, and our personal weapons, and I took the tool box. We went around with the LCV a couple of times and shot the pontoons full of .30-caliber holes. It was sinking as we left. After the coxswain on the LCV carried out the rest of his assignment, he took us out to the USS DuPage. Our crew included machine gunners John W. "Chick" Regentz and (possibly) Grant T. Wheelin.

TED "ZIP" SHEPPARD, Company D

As we made our run for the IVAN beach, the sea was extremely rough. Nearing our objective D-10, our tank, was hit by a huge wave and turned over in surf over fifteen feet high. Eddie A. Williams, our tank commander, and Ed (Barney J.) Edmonson, a machine gunner, were drowned. Clarence Leo Whitlock washed ashore and was the first man to hit the beach. William B. Burrum and René M. Bolduc got out okay and stayed about 100 yards from the beach. I was trapped in the tank and turned over completely three times; it was a miracle that I finally escaped. Later I boarded another tank to hit Allen in the afternoon.

C. L. WHITLOCK, Company D

I was a machine gunner on Tank D-10. The surf was so high that when I looked up from the tank it looked to be about a 20-foot high wall of water coming down on us. The tank was turned over, but I was a lucky Marine and got thrown out of the tank on

the first roll. I was washed ashore, where I was pinned down by enemy machine guns and friendly fire from tractors coming ashore. To my knowledge I was the first Marine on shore. A few minutes later our radioman, Ted "Zip" Sheppard, swam ashore. In his radio position he had had to stay in the tank until it stopped rolling; he found a bubble of air to breathe and then got free to swim ashore. Sgt. René M. Bolduc was hanging on to the tow cable on the tank because he couldn't swim. We didn't save any equipment but our knives. Everything else was lost on the tank. Later we found our tank commander, Eddie A. Williams of Missouri, dead on the beach; we couldn't recognize him. Our other machine gunner, Barney J. Edmonson of Texas, was missing in action.

WILLIAM MOIR, Company D

Going into IVAN we saw D-10 reach the surf and get turned over by it. The crew members tried clinging to the tank, but were tossed about like straws. We also saw D-18 conk out and be drawn into the surf. My notes say that Lieutenant Robert E. McDowell, Company D Commander, succeeded in saving the crews of these tanks.

Our tank, D-14, blew a fuse and was slowly drawn into that surf. Ralph H. Tabor, a Company D maintenance man, aboard D-14 as the ammunition passer, tried desperately to fix that fuse. We all put on life belts and all the equipment, grenades, and ammunition we could carry. When I climbed on top of the tank, we had drifted into the surf, and I was knocked into the water. I was scared stiff, was gurgling and gargling water, and didn't know whether to swim ashore and risk Jap fire, or swim out. I looked around and saw Bob Davis, our radio operator, waving and shouting for help; he had lost his life belt. Smitty (Arlo D. Smith) was trying to reach him, but I was too far away to be of any use. Taber, still in the tank, miraculously succeeded in fixing the fuse. Harold K. Miller, our driver, and Doc (Derk A.) Vloedman climbed aboard and got the tank moving out of the surf. Clinton D. Norrell, the tank commander, finally got aboard. Then I swam like mad, and he helped me get aboard. Then, before I could catch my wits, Norrell and I were both swept overboard again. This time I was the one who managed to get back on, and Doc Vloedman and I tried to haul Norrell aboard. I had Norrell's wrist, but the hold broke loose, and he was gone in the surf. At that point we were missing three D-14 men: Davis, the radio operator; Smith, the machine gunner; and Norrell, the tank commander. I felt very close to Smith; we had become fast buddies. Later a tractor came alongside with Smith and Norrell aboard, but they reported seeing Davis go down and not come up again. Davis drowned that day.

THE ALLEN AND ALBERT LANDINGS

The capture of IVAN and JACOB removed the threat of Japanese control of IVAN and JACOB Passes into the Kwajalein lagoon. Mine sweepers soon cleared these two passes so that LSTs, LSDs, LCIs, destroyers, and other ships could move through to begin the next action in the conquest of northern Kwajalein. From within the lagoon,

the second round of assaults was to be against Ennubirr (code-named ALLEN) and Ennumennet (ALBERT), two islets southeast of Namur, about 3.5 miles across the lagoon from JACOB, over five miles from IVAN. When Ennumennet had been secured, it would become the base for an attack on Ennugarret (ABRAHAM), separated by less than 500 yards of shallow water from Namur. Marine artillery, by then in position on IVAN and JACOB, would contribute to the bombardment of these islets and of Roi and Namur.

This second stage of the D-Day operation did not go smoothly. First, the lateness of the surf-delayed landings on IVAN and JACOB threw the afternoon landings off-schedule. Second, there was considerable confusion and delay when, due to a mix-up in orders, guide vessels for a time lost control of the movement of ships, boats, and vehicles into the lagoon. The most serious problem, however, was with the amtracs needed to ferry troops to the line of departure and to the beaches. Like the First Armored, the amtrac battalions had suffered serious losses from the overwhelming surfs in the IVAN and JACOB landings. Because radios on amtanks and amtracs alike had been drenched by seawater, many of them lacked communication with each other and with command networks. The attack force commanders had difficulty bringing enough amphibian tractors together at the line of departure for the landings. The amtanks of the First Armored's B and D Companies, of course, were also at less than full strength as they churned across the lagoon. Because of all these problems, it was necessary twice to postpone A-Hour for the simultaneous landings on ALLEN and ALBERT, first from 1130 hours to 1430, and then to 1500.

The landings on these two beaches followed the regular pattern of successive assault actions: naval shelling with aerial bombing and strafing, then LCI rocket launches, followed by the direct fire of the amtanks as they crossed the reef and, finally, the storming of the beaches by amtrac-borne infantry. Coral reefs still had to be crossed, but the surf inside the reef was not so violent as the terrible surf experienced earlier that day in the landing from open sea. Enemy resistance on the two islands was very light. A few amtracs and amtanks participated in the follow-up landing on Ennugarret (ABRAHAM), which could not be made till 1800, very late in the day. Other small islands were taken just to make sure they were clear of the enemy: Obella (ANDREW) and two tiny specks of land, ALEXANDER and ALBERT JUNIOR. By nightfall all the D-Day objectives had been taken despite the delays and confusion. All the little islands guarding the approaches to the main islands of Roi and Namur were in American, not Japanese, hands. Artillery of the 14th Marines was positioned on those islands, ready to support the next day's assault.

Late on D-Day many of the amtanks and amtracs were very low on fuel. That night some amtanks and amtracs returned to their host LSTs, but others could not find their way back or sank when their bilge pumps failed for lack of fuel. Some crews spent the night on one or another of the captured islands.

TED "ZIP" SHEPPARD, Company D

After we lost D-10, our tank, in the IVAN landing, I later boarded another tank to hit ALLEN in the afternoon.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

The same day we also hit ALBERT Island in the same manner as IVAN. A few amtracs were knocked out, but resistance was light. The tanks boarded an LSD that night, where we refueled and were ready to go for the next day.

WILLIAM MOIR, Company D

In the afternoon we drove into the lagoon through IVAN Pass and headed for ALLEN Island. D-14 had no radio, and the turret had to be worked manually. Clinton D. Norrell, the tank commander, refused to take the tank in, but the company commander, Lieutenant Robert E. McDowell, ordered him to do so, and he did. We lobbed a few shells into ALLEN, but the naval bombardment never let up. We reached the island, about five miles across the lagoon, just as the infantry hit the beach.

Someone thought the Japanese were returning fire from nearby tiny ALEXANDER Island and directed us to check it out. We ran up and over it. We saw palms and brush, and fired continually, but saw no Japs.

We headed out into the lagoon, boarded LSD-4 (Landing Ship, Dock), and stayed there for the night, refueling and repairing D-14. Norrell went to sickbay. He was sick—we all were—but that was the last time at Kwajalein that I saw Norrell.

ROBERT L. CONRAD, Company B

While eating we were given orders to assist on one of the other islands. Lieutenant (Edgar S.) Carlson, being in our tank, was privy to the orders before the rest of the company knew what was going to be done. We passed the word along and headed for Blue Beach 4 (ALLEN). At approximately 1400 we hit the beach and discovered that the infantry had gotten the situation quite well in hand since requesting help.

It was there that I saw my first "good" Jap. He was lying on the beach, apparently the victim of a high explosive, as parts of his anatomy were missing: there was severe trauma to his midsection, and a foot and ankle were missing. A machine gunner from one of the tanks accompanying us had a trench knife. He was knocking gold teeth out of the corpse when a Marine bird colonel waded in from the east, not unlike McArthur when he returned from the Philippines. He had been riding in an LCVP and was mad. My thought is that he was patrolling the perimeter looking for possible problems when he spotted the knife-wielding machine gunner. He bellowed out, "Put that knife away, you goddam ghoul! If I catch you or anyone else desecrating a corpse, you'll be in Naval prison for the rest of your life." With that he turned, waded out to the LCVP, where the coxswain was waiting, and departed. Nothing I had ever heard addressed this particular situation, but the colonel left no doubts in our minds: *Hands off!*

C. L. WHITLOCK, Company D

Most of us in the capsized D-10 crew stayed on Ivan Island that night, and on February 1 went aboard LST 270.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

We stayed ashore that night and took up beach defense positions around D-11. I didn't like it at all. It was very dark and quiet, and I could visualize hundreds of Japs coming ashore. None came but, needless to say, there wasn't any sleep that night. Star flares kept going up just about all night. You could tell our flares from the enemy's—ours were brighter.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

I think we remained on the island overnight. Under Lieutenant Stu (Edgar S.) Carlson's direction, I transmitted a radio message to Division headquarters reporting our casualties up to that time. They were amazingly light.

ROBERT L. CONRAD, Company B

At about 1600 we moved over to ABRAHAM, about 1000 yards offshore, where we had been ordered to shell at will. After all that had been said that morning about firing the cannon—believe it or not!—it wouldn't fire. My frustration knew no bounds. In desperation I pulled the manual trigger, and we had ignition. In gunnery school they never mentioned that if you fired that weapon with the manual trigger, you must come up from below to avoid the recoil. I was afraid to look at my right hand because the block had hit it on the recoil, and it was totally numb. I felt sure that most of the fingers were gone. When I did muster the courage to look, I was thrilled to see that it was all there, albeit completely void of any feeling. That manual firing was all the 37 needed; it functioned perfectly after that. By the time I had fired four shells at those dug-in Jap positions, we received a "cease fire."

We were running low on fuel, so we began the search for LSD-4 (*USS Epping Forest*). It was comparatively close, and we drove aboard with about a soup bowl of fuel left. That LSD seemed huge to us after having so much time on LSTs. After fueling we were directed to our berth. We then settled in for maintenance on the weapons and, hopefully, some sack time. We were told there was all the cold water we wanted on the second deck, so we "hightailed" up to partake of some of that soothing liquid. I've had ice cream that wasn't as good as that cold water.

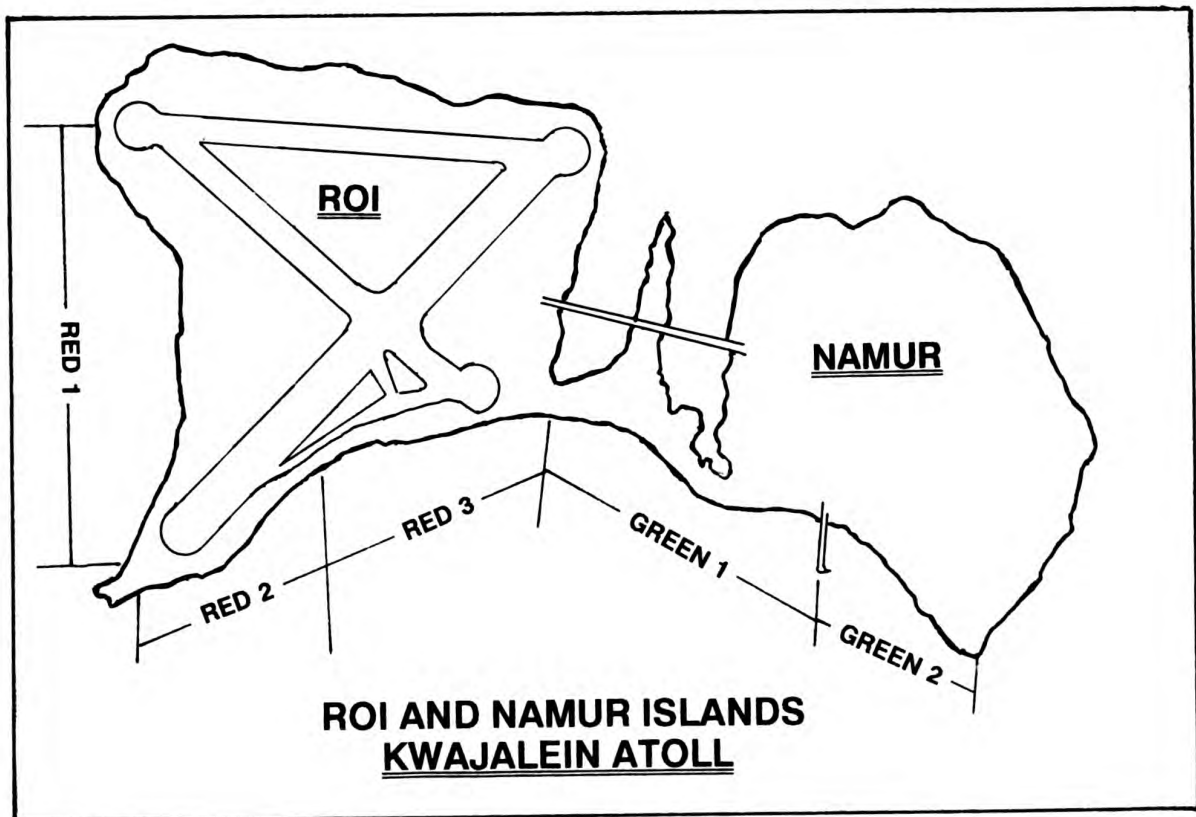
When we first parked in our well-deck position, we brought our packs up out of the tank and put them on the tank fantail to dry. Since we could drink only so much of that wonderful water, we reluctantly headed back to the well deck with the intent of getting toilet articles from our packs and generally preparing to get some sleep. The red blackout lights were on, and the well deck was just shadows. As our tank was the third one from the after end of the ship on the port side, I was counting the silhouettes of the

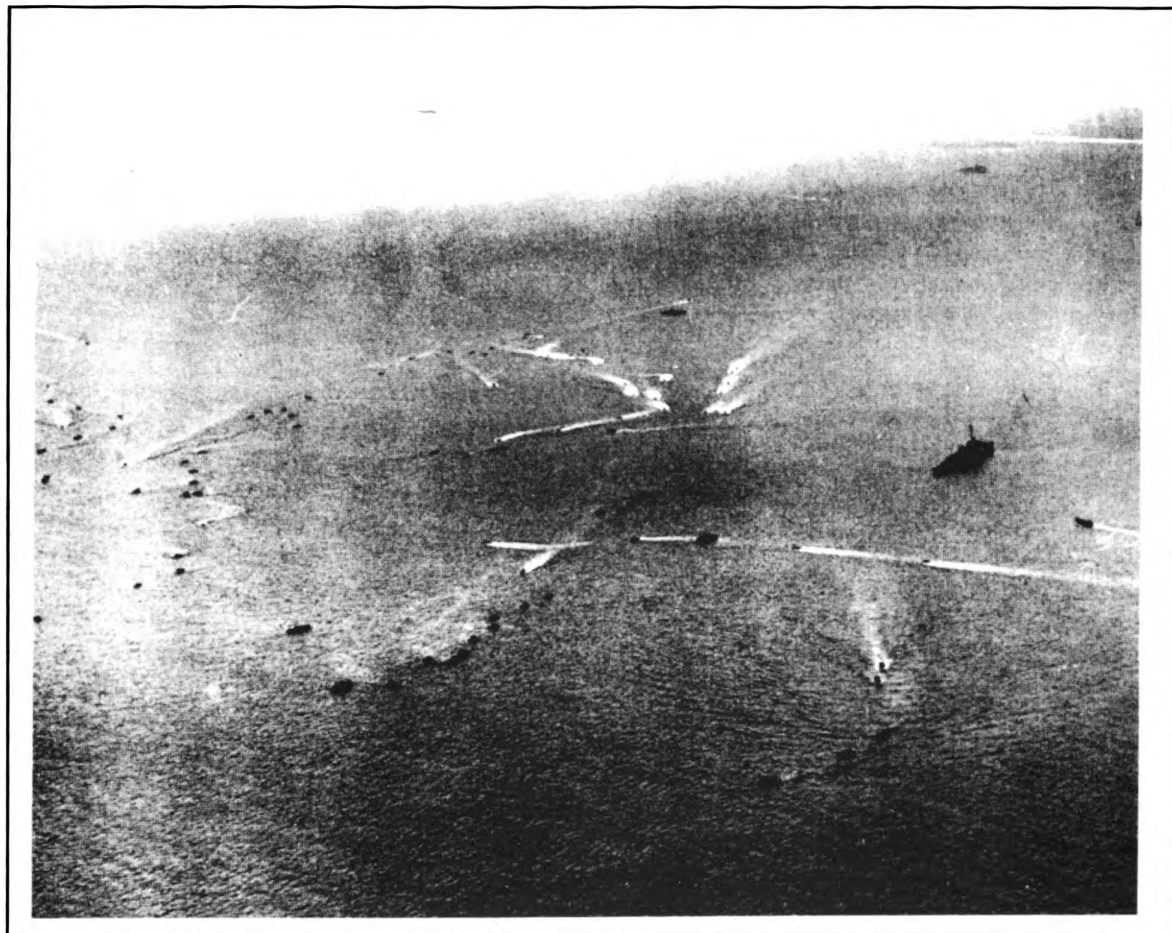
tank turrets, jumping from tank to tank. When I knew I had arrived at ours, I carefully walked toward the fantail and the packs. Walking in the dark on packs and bedrolls is a talent I had not acquired, and I was afraid I would lose my balance and fall off the machine. It was at this point, with my foot on something soft, that a voice came from the area of my foot and said, "You're standing on my face!" I couldn't believe there was a chump dumb enough to attempt sleeping on those packs. There in the darkness I blurted out, "Who the hell is it?" My chump said, "It's Mr. Carlson." Shoot, I thought, I never will get that PFC stripe.

D-PLUS-1: ROI AND NAMUR

February 1, 1944, D-plus-1, was the day for assault on the main targets in Northern Kwajalein, the islands of Roi (code-named BURLESQUE) and Namur (CAMOUFLAGE). The airfield on Roi and its supporting facilities on Namur, important to the outer defenses of the Japanese empire, would be invaluable in the U.S. drive across the central Pacific. The two islands, each less than a quarter of a square mile in area, were close together, actually connected by a causeway and by a narrow stretch of beach.

In the night and early morning, more LSTs had moved into the lagoon, bringing with them the 23d and 24th Marines and attached units, including the 4th Amphibian Tractor Battalion and Companies A and C of the First Armored. These forces were

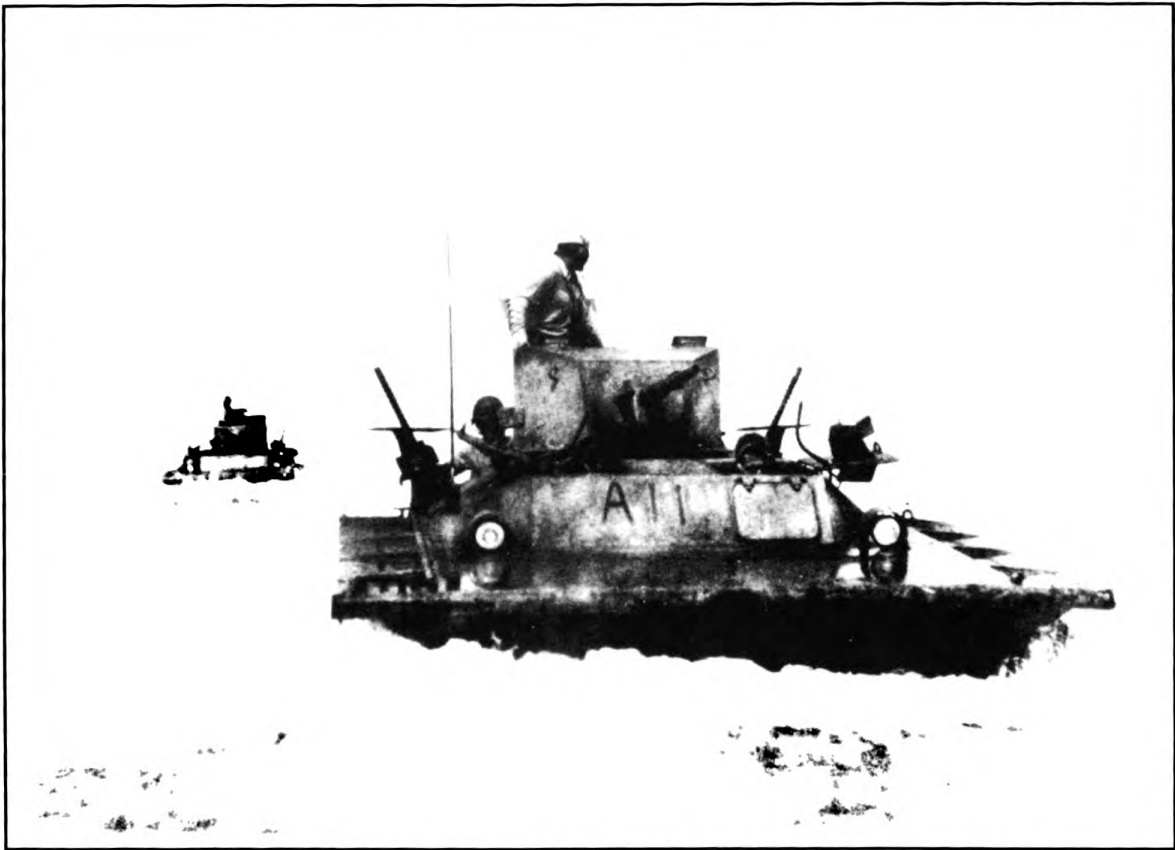




Aerial view of landing craft assembling for the assault on Roi (USN)

disembarked for movement toward a line of departure. Companies B and D of the First Armored, like the amtrac units, had incurred serious losses in both vehicles and men from the D-Day landings and now, on the morning of D-plus-1, were also widely dispersed, some on LSTs, some on LSD-4, and others on various islands. Because of the difficulties in assembling enough amphibian tractors to carry the infantry ashore, W-Hour, as the hour for the landings had been designated, was postponed from 1000 to 1100.

Amtanks of Companies A and C (and, as it turned out, the three amtanks of H&S Company) lined up to lead the 23d Marines against Beaches Red 2 and Red 3 on Roi. The available tanks of Companies B and D led the 24th Marines to Beaches Green 1 and Green 2 of Namur. It appears that, for the initial assault, no troops were committed to Roi's Red Beach 1, but some First Armored amtanks are reported to have reentered the water from Red 1 in the drive north along the western shore of Roi. The tactics were the same as for the previous day, with shelling, bombing, strafing, LCI rocket salvos, amtank fire, and the infantry assault. There were repeated reports by crewmen



Co. A amtanks moving to the line of departure for the Roi landing (USMC)

of the First Armored that amtanks were hit by "friendly" machine gun fire from the landing vehicles and craft following behind them.

The Japanese defense, though stubborn, was largely disorganized. It was learned later that U.S. naval and air bombardment had destroyed the base administration building, located on Namur—with all of its communication and intelligence facilities—and had also wiped out virtually all Japanese senior officers. With the command structure gone, defense was uncoordinated, left to individuals and small units.

ROI

Naval and aerial bombardment proved to have been very effective in destroying the fortifications on Roi. Opposition was so light that the regimental commander in his first report called the operation a "Pip." In fact, some land tanks, amtanks, and infantry pushed ahead so rapidly that the division commander, insisting on a more coordinated advance, had them recalled to the so-called 0-1 line. Roi was secured in a few hours, by 1802 hours on the first day.

Sergeant William T. McCartney of Company A of the First Armored and Private William D. Ray of Company C were killed in this landing, and several men were wounded.

WILLIAM D. GERMAIN, Company A

Breakfast, of steak and eggs on D-plus-1 was very early. We debarked at about 0630 and maneuvered around in circles until time to form a line and head toward Roi. The water was very rough. As we were moving toward the beach, a lot of shells were falling around us. I think some of them were the barrage rockets from some of the smaller boats. As they were set in a fixed position, when the boats went up and down, it changed the range, and the shells were falling near our tanks. Either shrapnel or percussion blew the top of my gunner's periscope off, and I had to replace it before I could continue firing. Because we had gotten a new tank, and the 37mm had never been test-fired, I didn't know until we started firing on the beach if it would function properly.

No one was wounded on our tank, but the tank to our right had pulled up onto the beach in front of a blockhouse. The tank commander, Sergeant (William T.) McCartney, stood up in the turret, and a sniper killed him. That showed that, despite all the bombardment and our firing on the beach, Japs right on the beach still survived.

The infantry came in, and the beach was getting congested, so we moved our platoon of tanks to a nearby island and set up a defense.

ROBERT W. PIERCE, Company A

Our landing on Roi met with little resistance other than some sniper fire. The island rose very little above sea level. There were some palm trees from which we drew sniper fire, but the Navy artillery had done a pretty complete job of destroying whatever buildings there may have been at the airport. Sergeant McCartney was the one casualty in A Company. The sergeant was directing his tank from the turret when he was struck by a bullet determined to be from sniper fire. We later named our camp at Guadalcanal in his honor.

DONALD L. FERCHAU, Company A

We formed up the line of departure and watched the dive-bombers and strafers. The LCIs moving in and firing their rockets were a magnificent sight. There were great swooshing noises as the rockets took off, then the flight through the air, then the landing—BOOM, BOOM, BOOM. I thought, "Go tell *that* to Tokyo Rose, Jap!" Then came our amphibian tanks, and we felt our muscle. On A-17 we were seven men strong, with a 37mm cannon, four .30-caliber machine guns, five .30-caliber carbines, and a .45-caliber pistol, all surrounded by one inch of American armor on the turret and a half inch on the sides. We had plenty of ammunition for those weapons, a few hand grenades, and a radio if we fell into trouble with any unforeseen force.

At first I couldn't see anything for us to land on. When I did see it, it was just



After the landing on Roi. Men and equipment piling up on the beach (USMC)

a thin line of sand with a few scrubby shrubs sticking up. I wondered why we wanted this tiny piece of land, but that was for the brass to decide. At first I couldn't see anything to fire at, but I fired anyway, a few rounds or a few hundred. I don't remember. When the infantry came ashore, we ceased firing. Once after that, I saw some movement, aimed with the machine gun and almost fired, when I realized he was one of ours.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

Confusion in assembling the troop-carrying LVT(2)s with the appropriate ships and landing craft caused delay after delay. Finally at about 1100 the landing was commenced. Although with no authority and no place in the operation or landing plan, but determined to be with my battalion, I led the three Headquarters LVTAs between the landing lanes and headed for the beach. We contributed nothing to the landing, but at least I was ashore with my fragmented battalion. We landed on Roi and, after looking over the beach, and stopping some of the infantry in the subsequent waves from firing into the Marines ahead of them, we moved to the left and proceeded down the left

flank of the island. As the LVTAs and land tanks had progressed almost to the end of the island, supporting the attacking infantry, it came as a great surprise when the orders were received to withdraw back to the 0-1 control line. To me it was crazy to give up terrain we had already captured. We obeyed and withdrew.

THOMAS T. OYLER, Company C

Company C landed on Roi Island. There was some wave action. A young private (William D. Ray) riding in a rear gun well was killed. It was thought that he had been hit by fire from following amtracs when our tank rose on a swell.

BYRON G. SNEVA, Company C

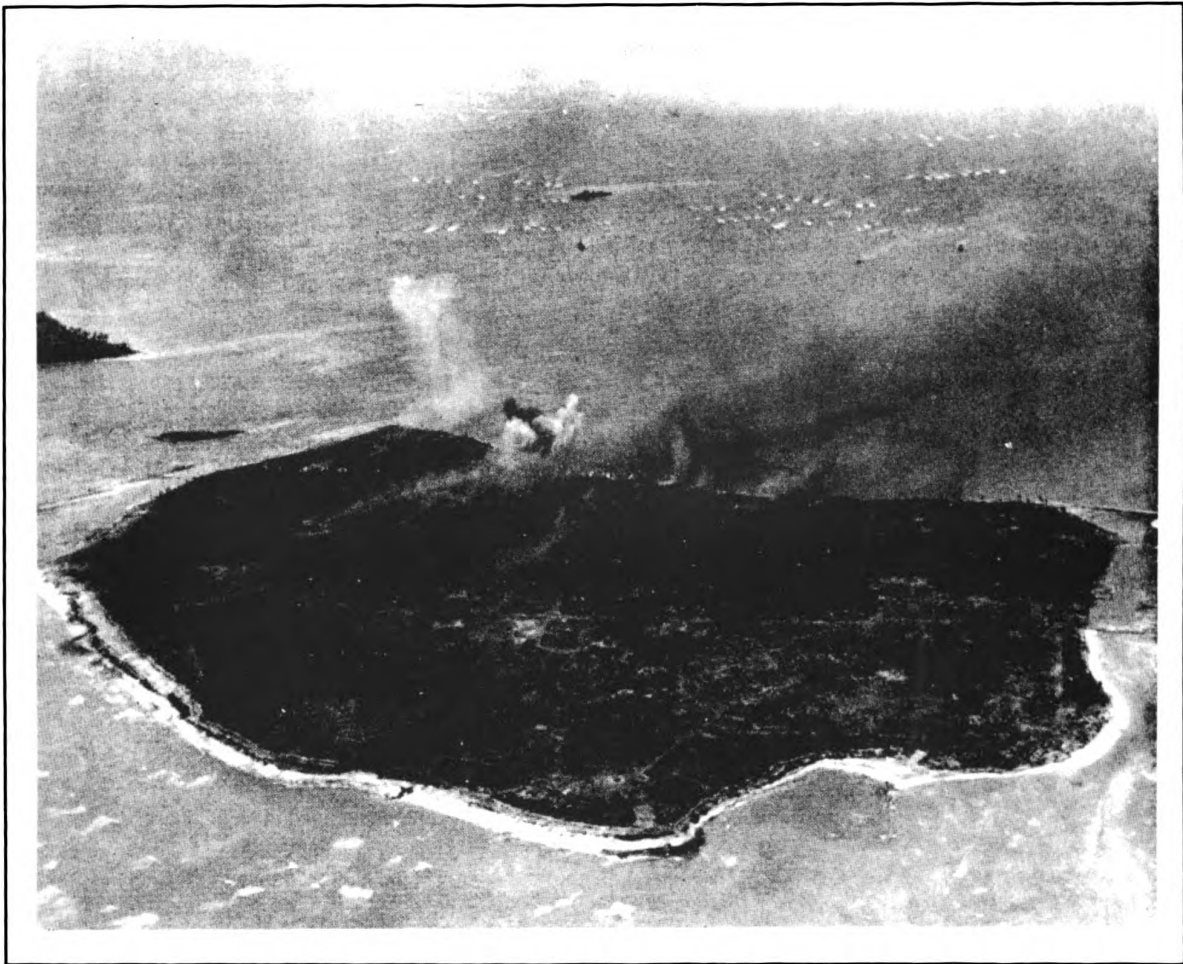
We went in toward the Roi beach. There was so much support by shelling and rockets that we had to slow down in order to see the island. B-24s came over and, from their bombs raising so much dust and debris, we had to completely stop. We encountered only sniper fire coming in. Our clutch was not working very well. It seemed as though the enemy had moved out or had scattered out on some of the other islands. Casualties were very light. William D. Ray was killed by supporting machine gun fire from the 4th Amphibian Tractor Battalion. Our platoon suffered no injuries.

ROBERT C. BLAEMIRE, Company C

On Tank C-13, 3d Platoon of C Company, Homer H. Edwards was my tank commander and I was the 37mm gunner. In the landing on February 1, he and I stood on the seat of our turret and were watching dive-bombers breaking out over our tank. All of a sudden I heard Edwards cry out, and blood shot all over my side of the turret. I felt hot BB's hit my arm. I turned around and saw he had been hit in the hand. It was pretty bad. I grabbed his wrist, helped him out of the tank, laid him down, and took a better look at his hand. An explosive bullet had pierced the back of his hand, blown up in his palm, and ripped it wide open. He lost three fingers in the blast. I put a tourniquet on it and gave him a shot of morphine. After this was finished, I realized that if his hand hadn't been where it was, I would have received the blast in my stomach. His hand was right in front of me pointing out at the dive-bombers in the sky. The turret was hit three times before Edwards was hit. To say the least, Edwards went home. When we got back to the States, he came to visit us at Camp Pendleton. It was then he told us they had taken 32 pieces of shell out of his hand.

NAMUR

Unlike Roi, with its fairly open terrain, Namur was studded with buildings and covered with jungle-like vegetation. Navy and air strikes had left masses of broken concrete, twisted steel, and dead bodies. Many of Namur's blockhouses and pillboxes, however, had survived sufficiently to offer cover for the enemy defenders. These obstacles hampered the 24th Marines in their advance across the island. A much more



Aerial view of landing craft (upper right in photo) moving toward Namur (USN)

serious problem, however, was the difficulty experienced before the landing in assembling amphibian tractors from the battered and scattered ranks of the 10th Amtrac Battalion. Even with W-Hour delayed till 1100, the run to the beach was made with little more than half of the scheduled amtracs. A major event was the incredible explosion of a blockhouse used for the storage of torpedo warheads. When a Marine assault team threw satchel charges into the blockhouse, the whole building instantly disappeared in a roar, concrete and other debris were flung skyward to fall destructively back to earth, 20 Marines were killed, and 100 were wounded. Two more explosions occurred soon after. Namur was not secured till early afternoon the next day, February 2.

The regimental commander had ordered the amtanks of Companies B and D to proceed inland 100 yards from the beach, but this proved impossible because of antitank ditches and other obstacles just behind the beaches. The amtanks stood 50 yards offshore and fired at targets ahead of the infantry. In addition to several wounded, PFC Marvin W. Grantham of Company D was killed in the landing.

ROBERT L. CONRAD, Company B

Chow was at about 0730 on the second day and, after getting everything ready in the tank, we shoved off once again. We formed into assault waves and hit the beach. There was still a great deal of shelling going on. Before we hit the beach, one more wing of dive bombers made a bombing pass, which was certainly interesting to see. With the front row seat that we had, it couldn't have been more than 400 yards away. The island, the fortifications, the palm trees—everything was smashed. The casualties were considerably higher than on the previous day. Demolition squads had worked their way up and into former Jap positions, many of which had been jackhammered deep into the coral island. The demo men were blowing everything into oblivion. In the afternoon we were ordered to stand offshore and shell a pillbox installation on the island. The infantry troops were having a difficult time neutralizing the Japs but, for us, the day was really quite uneventful.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

Coming in to the beach at 1100, in the first wave, I was plenty scared. I saw for the first time how the Japs dig in, with blockhouses made of concrete and reinforced steel, so tough our 37mm shells would just chip the concrete. That's where the infantry flamethrowers were used. We met light opposition, mostly machine gun fire. We were all soaked, and the water played hell with the radios, knocking out both the intercom and radio communications.

DONALD C. HOUSTON, Company B

After the initial landing, B Company was ordered to pull off to one side of the landing area and fire on a blockhouse. We were in a line, firing on the target, when some Marines ashore came running toward us waving their arms. The word was there were troops all around the blockhouse. Naturally we ceased fire.

JAMES C. CHANDLER, Company B

As we went in, I was in a machine gun well, and a spot of paint flecked off my shield, just a couple of inches to the right of my face. A few minutes later I flipped the shield up so I could see the other side and found not a scratch. The round had come from the amphib alligator behind us.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

The most impressive event was the explosion of a blockhouse on Namur. A huge tower of rocks and dirt rose in the air. The shock wave shook the area for many hundreds of yards. The blockhouse contained Japanese torpedo warheads, which were detonated by Marine satchel charges. Most of the casualties and missing were caused by that explosion.



The blockhouse explosion on Namur as seen from Roi (USMC)

EARL M. HILL, Company B

On Day Two at Kwajalein, my unit moved through the smooth waters of the lagoon toward Namur. We supported Marine infantry troops of the 4th Division in the invasion of that island. While my amtank was afloat just offshore from the southern beach of Namur, I felt and heard simultaneously a stupendous explosion, almost as if my vehicle had been blown out of the water. Looking toward the center of Namur, I observed a massive column of earth, coconut logs, assorted debris, and God knows what else, ascending to a great height. This formation seemed to rise endlessly until at last near the top it began to blossom outward and rain down the debris it had carried up. It was not atomic, of course, but this was my first sight of what later became all too familiar to the world—a mushroom cloud. The mushroom cloud is common to any large, unconfined atmospheric explosion.

At one point during the mop-up, my amtank was afloat adjacent to a pier at Namur when a swimmer was sighted approaching our vehicle. Apprehending enemy sabotage activities, the poor fellow was immediately covered by all the weaponry the

amtank crew could bring to bear upon him as he stroked stolidly in our direction. It turned out to be a Marine private from another B Company vehicle, clad only in dungaree trousers and clenching his K-Bar combat knife between his teeth. At about the same time B Company's commander (1st Lieutenant Edgar S. Carlson) appeared on the beach near our position, in a high state of excitement, with his .45-caliber pistol unholstered and swinging freely from its lanyard. He was anxiously marshalling his company for withdrawal and loading ships anchored in the lagoon. We took the stalwart swimmer aboard, cranked up, and headed for the ships.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

After refueling from LSD-4, we hit CAMOUFLAGE (Namur) Island, reaching the beach at about 1140. We were met by a hail of lead and hand grenades. There were sand barriers, oil drums filled with cement, and pillboxes with walls three feet thick. Only by direct hits could Naval bombardment knock them out, but flamethrowers worked very well. There were snipers everywhere, and one of them got George R. Smith, the D-6 tank commander, in his rear. Naval and air bombardment destroyed 75 Japanese planes on the ground. The enemy had not a single plane in the air. Not until 2000 did we return to LST 270.

RICHARD ZENGER, Company D

Our tank at Kwajalein was D-6. The crew was George R. Smith, George D. De Angelo, Clarence R. Forbes, James E. Wylemski, and myself. Lieutenant James W. Dupree, the 2d Platoon leader, rode in our tank. As we approached the beach on Namur Island in a line, after a heavy naval bombardment, I looked through my periscope and saw a Japanese soldier throwing a grenade at our tank. He was cut down by friendly fire as he launched the grenade, and I don't know what happened to the grenade.

We were called off the beach shortly after the infantry had moved through us and took up positions about half a mile out in the lagoon. At this point we had the engine shut down and were feeling pretty cocky, just lolling around on top of the tank. Then we heard a sound like a seltzer bottle being charged, and George R. Smith grabbed his butt. He had been shot cleanly through the fleshy part of his butt, but felt little pain and lost practically no blood. We put sulfa and a bandage on the wound, but he didn't get formal care until we returned to our LST later in the day and the corpsman aboard ship took care of it. Apart from that incident our crew came through unscathed.

WILLIAM MOIR, Company D

For D+1 at Kwajalein Tank D-14 was in bad shape. It was running but, because it was filled with water, you couldn't see through the periscope. This may sound silly, but we tied ropes to Harold K. Miller, the driver, one to each shoulder, under the arm-pits. If we wanted him to turn right, we pulled on the right rope, and left, on the left rope. Having lost Clinton D. Norrell, we got Ralph H. Taber, a great guy, as our tank commander. As ammunition passer, we also got Marvin W. Grantham, tank commander

of D-18, one of the tanks lost in action the day before. I may not have this right, but I heard Grantham had lost a brother at Tarawa, and volunteered to come with D-14 to get his shot at the Japanese.

It was raining, and the bombardment on Roi and Namur continued. Our job was to hit the small sand strip connecting Roi and Namur. We wanted to be the first to hit the beach. Just before we reached the beach, the tank caught coral and turned sideways. I went down to get some ammunition to reload, and as I turned to wish Grantham luck, he was about to open the hatch. He wanted to stick his Tommy gun out to shoot at the Japs if there were any. He had it open about two inches when the Japs cut loose, and he slumped over with a bullet through his head. I grabbed the gun and fired without really seeing anything, but something hit my helmet, and then my shield. I spotted some kind of movement and turned my machine gun toward it and fired. Smitty (Arlo D. Smith) also fired his machine gun, and Doc (Derk A.) Vloedman dropped an H.E.A.P. canister on them. As we hit the beach, other tanks took up the fire. I looked at Smitty and saw he was covered with blood. He went down into the tank, then told me, "It's only shrapnel," and got to his feet. By this time the Marine infantry were ashore. Smitty caught more shrapnel, probably from "friendly" fire. The rest of us in exposed positions in the tank were not hit, though I had a gash in my helmet. Smitty was taken to a hospital ship, and we thought he would be okay.

We were left on the beach. The Japs were still putting up a fight with the infantry, not too far away, and bullets were flying all over the place. The rest of Company D left us and went to reinforce another company, which was having difficulty. The Japanese fire ceased about 1600, and we went souvenir hunting, picking up Japanese rifles, sake, cartridges, leather, Japanese money, books, pens, cigarettes, chevrons, a bayonet. There were quite a few dead Japanese on the island.

D-PLUS-1 NIGHT

By nightfall Roi was secured, but on Namur troops of the 24th Marines had to dig in for the night. As on the night before, some First Armored men found space on ships, others bivouacked on one island or another. How each crew fared depended very much on its circumstances when night fell.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

That night we bivouacked on the beach, and the next day I made the rounds, checking up on the Battalion. Some had returned to their LSTs, others remained ashore. Once the islands were secured, the regimental commanders ignored the armored amphibian companies attached to their regiments.

DONALD C. HOUSTON, Company B

That night B Company was ordered to an LSD to refuel and take on supplies. When we came alongside the loading ramp, we tried to tie up there because there were

a lot of tanks trying to get aboard. The main reason we wanted to tie up was we were almost out of gas. But the sailor in charge of the ramp would not let us regardless, and waved us off. Sure enough, after a few minutes, the engine quit, and we were adrift with no power, drifting farther away from the ship all the time. Fortunately we saw an amphibian tractor a short distance away, and we flashed him an SOS. He had a spare five-gallon blitz can of gas aboard and gave it to us. It was ample to get us back to the ship.

WILLIAM D. GERMAIN, Company A

When our part of the landing was done, we boarded an LSD (Landing Ship, Dock), the first time we had been on a ship of that type. It was easy to board. They just filled with enough water so that we could drive right in and park our tanks. They then pumped out the water, and there we were all loaded and ready to take off.

THOMAS T. OYLER, Company C

At least the 1st Platoon of C Company was ordered to return to the ship late in the afternoon, and we boarded LST 119 at about dusk. The commanding officer of the 4th Amphibian Tractor Battalion ordered us to return to shore, but he was overruled by an admiral, the flotilla commander, who was aboard LST 119.

BYRON G. SNEVA, Company C

We came back aboard LST 119 that evening. We left our tanks tied alongside, and they got beat up quite a bit. Harold E. Keith and Jacob Mandelbaum had been injured, in the leg and arm respectively.

DONALD L. FERCHAU, Company A

That night we bivouacked on a very small island next door. The fact is, it was so small we didn't have room to go ashore. We just attached ourselves to it and stayed in the tank. Since we couldn't have fires, we dined on K and C rations.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

That night we dug in and stayed on ABRAHAM Island, which had been secured by that time. I was dog-tired and had only K rations for chow. We set up a guard for the night.

ROBERT L. CONRAD, Company B

We "dug in" (a figure of speech, for there was no tool that would have made an impression on that soil) on ABRAHAM that night. I caught the first relief of the guard, from 2000 to 2400. Everything was cool until about 2349, when Jap flares burst almost directly over me. The "powers that be" had assumed that all the Japs had been chased from ABRAHAM or, of course, killed. This apparently was not the case, for the bastards

had killed several Marines on the west side of the island. The flares had been fired to see if they dared advance in search of a safe place to bed down. The rest of our tank crew were either underneath the tank or inside it, so were not affected by the flares. I, however, was standing on the beach; I felt so vulnerable. Three flares were fired, then darkness and silence. My guard replacement relieved me and, happily, I climbed into the tank. After the openness of the beach, it seemed as secure as Fort Knox.

MOPPING UP AND SHIPPING OUT

THE MOP-UP

Phase 3 of the northern Kwajalein operation was to assure that Japanese resistance on all islands in the area had been ended. In addition to the islands already taken, the tiny islets nearby, with names like Boggerlapp (code-named HUBERT), Boggerik (HOMER), and Edgigen (ANTON), had to be cleared. Units of the 25th Marines were given this task, supported by Company A of the 10th Amphibian Tractor Battalion. At first artillery batteries from the 14th Marines and some amtanks from Company B of the First Armored were employed in the mop-up but, when no resistance was met, these were released. In about five days 39 islets were secured. About 250 Marshall Islanders were found, but no Japanese. On all islands, but especially on Roi and Namur, all hands were put to the urgent, but odious, task of burying several thousand Japanese bodies, some in advanced stages of decomposition.

ROBERT L. CONRAD, Company B

In the morning of the third day, February 2, I awoke to the chatter of *our* machine guns. There was no question, ever, whether you were hearing a .30-caliber or a Jap .25. Even though the .25 made much less noise, we found out that they could be just as deadly. The Japs who had fired the flares the night before apparently didn't like what they saw, and remained in their position until daylight. I stayed in the tank until the fire fight was over rather than climb out and catch a stray round. When the Japs made their move in the morning, they were executed. Since ABRAHAM (Ennugarret) had been declared secure, we assumed they had walked on the submerged coral from Namur to ABRAHAM to find a safer refuge. They didn't find much safety, however, for they were lying dead on the beach. The day had peaked at dawn, because the rest of the day consisted of nothing more than fueling the tank and taking aboard additional supplies. In the afternoon, just in case, we patrolled some of the little islands that had also been declared secure. That night we once again boarded LSD-4 and had the privilege of partaking of some of that wonderfully chilled water.

In the morning of February 3 we did nothing but wait to see if we were needed anywhere. In the afternoon we did a final patrol on five islands—ABRAHAM, ALBERT (Ennumennet), ALLEN (Ennubirr), ALTON, and ANDREW (Obella). On ANDREW 47 people were huddled. We went on the premise that they were natives of the islands.

Because we could not tell by looking, they were treated as POWs; the concern was that some of the Jap troops might have joined them to escape. Many souvenirs were found, including Jap navy blankets, tools, pictures, newspapers, even some barber equipment, and other things of interest to souvenir-hunting Marines.

DONALD C. HOUSTON, Company B

A day or so later, 1st Platoon, B Company, was assigned to go down a chain of islands in the atoll and check for hold-out Japanese. To support us, we were assigned a small contingent of infantry, who rode on top of our tanks. Fortunately we ran into no resistance and found none of the enemy. Altogether we landed on seven or eight islands in the chain.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

On the third day (D+2) in our bivouac on ABRAHAM Island, I woke up at about 0600 to the sound of machine gun fire. I was so sleepy I didn't give much thought to it. But when more of them opened fire, I began to wonder. From what my buddies were saying, it sounded as if the island was being attacked and we were surrounded by Japs. But it was just rumor, which had spread like wildfire. What happened was that Japs were infiltrating from neighboring Namur Island, but were being killed before reaching the beach.

That day and night our squad spent on JACOB Island. As B-3 had a hole in one of its pontoons, other tanks took several small islands. On this island many dead Japs floated in with the tide. On all the islands there was the constant stench of the dead, the smell of gunpowder, and the sight of destruction caused by the bombing and shelling.

On the fourth day (D+3) we stood by awaiting further orders. Everyone was pretty busy hauling in supplies and burying the dead. Before the day was over, we went back aboard LSD-4 (the *USS Epping Forest*), a new type of ship, much better and bigger than an LST.

EMBARKATION

When all actions had ended, men and whatever am tanks were fit for future service were gathered aboard ships for departure. Our transport was to be, not LSTs, but two LSDs (Landing Ships, Dock) and a troop ship (an APA). Men and tanks had to be collected from LSTs and islands.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

I was called to Admiral Conolly's flagship and given orders to embark the Battalion and proceed to Guadalcanal. The *Epping Forest* (LSD-4), the *Gunston Hall* (LSD-5), and the *DuPage* (an APA) were the ships. Embarkation was simple as, due to the limited land mass of Kwajalein, we had been restricted to a few tents, two jeeps, and no "housekeeping" gear. All our motor transport vehicles, maintenance equipment, spare

parts, tents, mess equipment, and other supplies and equipment had either been left with our rear echelon. Property of the line four companies had, in general, been sent with the 4th Marine Division supplies and equipment to Maui, Hawaii.

WILLIAM MOIR, Company D

By 1100 the morning of D+2, all was quiet. I'll never forget the sights I saw on Namur. Japanese bodies were all torn, with wounds to arms, legs, heads, stomachs. A grenade had gone off on a Marine's belt, or in his pocket, leaving him just lying there with his stomach all blown apart. Ralph H. Taber and I drank some of the sake we had found. We started cleaning D-11, our disabled tank, and it was a bloody mess. At about 1500 an LST, coming in to beach itself alongside of us, tried to miss a dud, possibly an aircraft bomb that hadn't exploded. The LST did miss the dud by inches, but barely missed ramming our tank. Lieutenant Robert E. McDowell came for us in a boat and took us back to the ship. We had to leave the tank there, though we did save some equipment. Men without tanks, including others besides us, went aboard the transport *DuPage*.

BYRON G. SNEVA, Company C

On Wednesday morning, February 2 (D+2) we started cleaning up our gear and brought our tanks aboard LST 119. Then, that afternoon we took all our gear and moved to LSD-4. After getting aboard, we found we were supposed to be on LSD-5, but we spent the night on LSD-4 anyway. I had a nice shower, the first in two weeks.

On Thursday we moved to LSD-5 (*USS Gunston Hall*) and found other First Armored troops aboard. Altogether we had H&S Company, two platoons of A Company, and C Company's 1st & 2d Platoons. Bob (Robert W.) Pierce of A Company was aboard, and we planned a picnic that night on the bridge deck. We stole a nice hot loaf of bread and a can of peaches, and ate until we nearly burst.

In the next two days the rest of A & C Companies came aboard, and we worked like hell loading supplies and cleaning our weapons. I wrote several letters. A carrier came in late Saturday, February 5, with a bunch of planes on deck. I saw the Seabees working all one night, probably getting the runways on Roi back in action.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

On February 2 (D+2) we refueled and stood by on LST 270. The next day we moved equipment and men from the LST to LSD-4 (the *USS Epping Forest*). On the 4th (D+4) we went back to Roi and Namur to strip tanks that had been knocked out of action. Boy! What a smell! We found one tank with its track right smack on a 500-pound bomb. We didn't notice it until our work was finished. On February 5, on LSD-4, we cleaned our personal and tank weapons and relaxed.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

About the fourth day my platoon boarded the *USS Epping Forest* (LSD-4), a floating dry dock type of ship, quite large. As I remember, the tank deck could probably hold all the D Company tanks. After securing D-11 I wandered around and found a bunk. I fell into it and slept for I don't know how long. I was not only physically exhausted, but really emotionally drained. That was some experience to go through.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

Aboard LSD-4 we heard radio news from San Francisco and were amused to hear the commentator tell about the new amphibious contraptions used in the Marshalls invasion. This was the first time amphibian tanks had been used in any operation, and they proved satisfactory. We began working on the tanks to clean them up, drying everything out, and generally getting them back in shape. Everything was wet as, during the whole operation, we were continuously soaked.

ASSESSMENT

Despite the violent surf, despite the drowned communications, despite the delays and confusions, Roi and adjacent islands had been taken after only two days of ground fighting, Namur on the third day. In the south the Army 7th Infantry Division had secured Kwajalein Island after five days. Majuro had been taken by a small force in only a few hours. This relatively easy victory justified Admiral Nimitz's bold strategy of striking deep into the Marshalls. Before the end of the month Army and Marine forces would take Eniwetok Atoll, even farther west.

The Kwajalein invasion has been hailed as demonstrating how successfully the "Lessons of Tarawa" were learned. The pre-invasion bombardment was more intense and of longer duration than for Tarawa, and small adjacent islands were taken as artillery positions for support in the main assault. Amtracs were employed more extensively than at Tarawa, and amtanks for the first time served as assault weapons. Never again would an amphibious assault be undertaken without them. Both the Navy and the Marine Corps, however, demonstrated they were still learning how best to use the amphibian vehicles. The amtrac battalions had been formed too late before the invasion to be well trained. Many of their difficulties must be attributed to the haste with which the campaign was mounted. And the parceling out of First Armored companies to infantry units left them under the direction of commanders who had little understanding of the capabilities of this new weapon. A "lesson of Kwajalein," observed in all future operations, was to preserve the command integrity of the Battalion.

The casualty rate for Kwajalein was considered light. In northern Kwajalein the total number of casualties among forces operating in or with the 4th Marine Division was 313 killed in action (or died of wounds) and 502 wounded. The official histories show that the First Armored suffered nine killed, eight wounded. For this publication, how-

ever, we have been able to identify only six of the men killed in action. Though Kwajalein was assessed as an easy operation overall, the fortunes of battle are never evenly distributed. Some amtank crews were hit harder than others, and they probably had their own assessment of the difficulties of Kwajalein. When casualties occur in a Marine's own crew or platoon, the sense of loss is personal and deep.

WILLIAM MOIR, Company D

I know that the Marshall Islands were considered by the Marine Corps, and even by some First Armored companies, to be an easy invasion. But the 3d Platoon of Company D had a tough time of it. D-14 and some of the others had a bad time. Our casualties included Bob Davis, drowned, and Marvin W. Grantham, shot and killed. Smitty (Arlo Dwayne Smith) and Ralph Taber were wounded. I never saw Smitty after that. Clinton D. Norrell, I guess, was a medical casualty. Only Harold K. Miller and I had no injuries, but I was scared for a long time after that, and I'm sure Harold was too.

CHAPTER

SIX

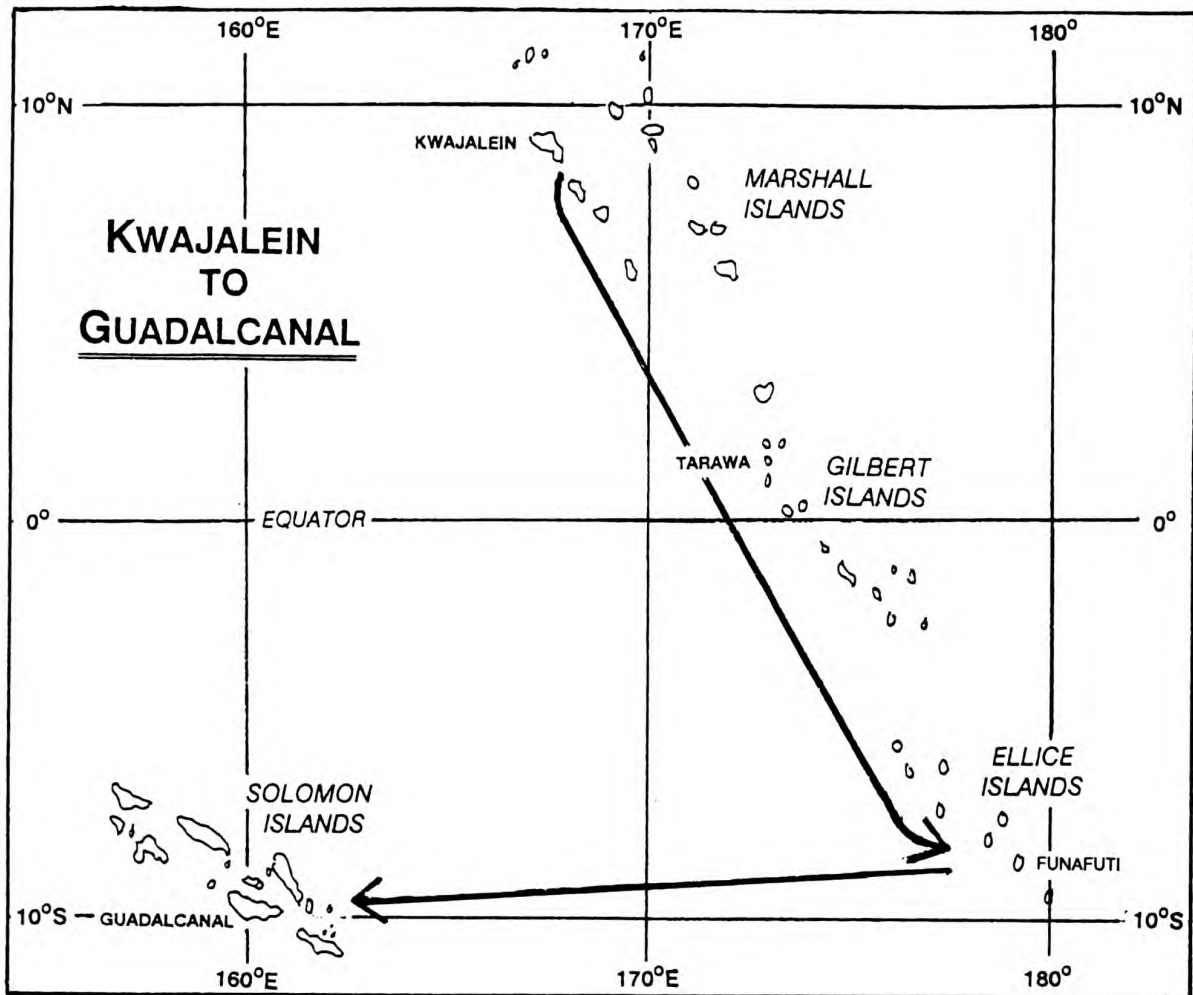
From Kwajalein to Guadalcanal

When Major Metzger received orders to proceed with his battalion to Guadalcanal, a rapid train of events was set in motion. While still in the Kwajalein lagoon, First Armored men were transferred from LSTs to three ships which would transport them south. In general, combat crews and tanks from Companies B and D were loaded aboard LSD-4 (the *Epping Forest*), those from Companies A and C aboard LSD-5 (the *Gunston Hall*). Headquarters men and the crews of amtanks lost in combat were assigned to the *USS DuPage*, a troop ship. These ships left Kwajalein Atoll in convoy on February 6, 1944, only six days after the first D-Day landings, on IVAN and JACOB.

An important task of men on the LSDs was to repair and service their amtanks, so badly abused in the landings by surf, coral, and enemy fire. Radios, weapons, and other equipment, soaked in salt water, had to be cleaned up and dried out. The LSDs had impressive shops and equipment to support this work.

The convoy traveled southeast across the equator and on February 10, dropped anchor in the lagoon of Funafuti, an atoll in the Ellice Islands which had become an important U.S. air and naval base. The ships rode at anchor in the lagoon, with troops kept aboard, not allowed to go ashore. When more men were transferred from the LSDs to the *DuPage*, it became known that the *DuPage* contingent of the Battalion would constitute an advance party to precede the rest of the Battalion to Guadalcanal and begin setting up a camp there.

The *DuPage* left Funafuti on February 14 and arrived at Guadalcanal on February 18. There they unloaded at Tetere Beach. The LSDs did not leave Funafuti till February 17 and dropped anchor off Tetere Beach on February 22.



TED "ZIP" SHEPPARD, Company D

On February 3 I transferred with others in D Company to the *USS Epping Forest*. Then on February 6 I was transferred again, with several others, to the transport, *DuPage*.

ROBERT W. PIERCE, Company A

We returned after the Roi and Namur landings to our respective LSTs. We stayed in the atoll for a couple of days awaiting further orders. When word did come, it was to board LSDs for transport to Guadalcanal, which was to be our "rest camp." LSDs were unusual ships. They loaded from the stern rather than from the bow. The stern ramp was lowered, and ballast tanks lowered the ship deck, allowing the amphibians to be maneuvered into place while afloat. Once the tanks were aligned, the deck was emptied of water, and the tanks were then chained and secured to deck anchors. The ship housed many more tanks than did the LSTs. They would hold over two companies

of tanks, actually 41 LVTAs. It had a large galley and a bakery, which meant fresh bread and good meals.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

Most if not all of B Company was taken off Kwajalein by the *USS Epping Forest* (LSD-4). The "Landing Ship, Dock" was originally intended to transport and support motor torpedo boats. Essentially it was comprised of two parallel hulls enclosing an open "well deck" between the hulls. At the stern, a broad gate opened downward to serve as a ramp, or to securely enclose the well deck when closed. With the gate open and the surface of the well deck submerged, the ship closely resembled a floating dry dock. To board our amtanks, the Navy thoughtfully opened the gate and submerged only the aft portion of the well deck, enabling our amtanks to drive aboard effortlessly.

WILLIAM D. GERMAIN, Company A

The LSD-4 was a big ship, and there wasn't much to do but clean up tanks and guns. As it was crowded, we slept where we could. It was a very GI ship, with ringing of the bells and piping down all commands, something we who had traveled on LSTs weren't used to.

ROBERT W. PIERCE, Company A

Because there were so many Marine tankers aboard, there were not enough accommodations for all, and we slept on the tanks. Sometimes the Navy personnel would allow us to use their sacks when they were on duty. I heard some stories about straining torpedo juice through bread dough on that ship, but I never participated in drinking the residue.

TED "ZIP" SHEPPARD, Company D

On the *DuPage* we had good chow, and I could enjoy the good life relaxing and resting topside, but my sleeping quarters were hot. On February 8 we crossed the equator and had initiations for all men and officers who were crossing for the first time.

BYRON G. SNEVA, Company C

On Sunday, February 6, we left the Kwajalein lagoon at about 0900 in a convoy which included three LSDs, four transports, and three destroyers. Life on LSD-5 was not ideal. I slept on a cot on the tank deck, and that was rough. We had inspections, guard duty, and drills. The chow was rotten, the weather was hot as hell, and it rained a lot. We crossed the equator on February 8, and I shaved off my beard. That day we learned that the First Armored had been attached to the First Marine Amphibious Corps (IMAC; on 4/15/44 IMAC became IIIAC, the III Amphibious Corps).

EARL M. HILL, Company B

Once again troop accommodations aboard ship were woefully inadequate. Although the chow was superior to that served us aboard the LSTs, troop quarters were no better. Many Marines were obliged to sleep upon any flat surface available, above or below decks. Apparently the crime rate aboard the *Epping Forest* was low, because some of our senior NCOs, including Technical Sergeant Kemp "Windy" Winchester, were able to occupy bunks in the ship's otherwise empty brig. While under way at sea and while anchored in the Funafuti lagoon, several lesser personages, including Art (Arthur M.) Cochran, Chuck (Charles E.) Kirk and me, set up housekeeping in the bow anchor chain locker. (We took care to clear those quarters whenever the anchor chain was to be deployed or hauled in.) Art recently reminded me that, during our occupancy of the chain locker, we indulged in serious deliberations of such esoteric literary works as "Thanatopsis." More often we read, re-read, swapped and discussed tattered dog-eared copies of paperback issues of Damon Runyan's short stories or H. Allen Smith's humorous anthologies.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

Two things stand out in my mind about the *Epping Forest* (LSD-4). In addition to an officer's head and an enlisted head, there was one for warrant officers. Boy, there was discrimination for you! Also, I never saw so many chief petty officers. I knew then where the term, "too many chiefs and not enough Indians," came from. I do realize that the *Epping forest* was a repair ship and really needed the skills of the CPOs.

I learned long after the war that in 1979 the *Epping Forest* was sold to Japan for scrap metal. Who knows, perhaps some of us today who drive a Japanese car may have a part of LSD-4 in the garage.

While aboard the *Epping Forest* I did some routine work on D-11. We cleaned weapons and the insides of the tank in general. The radio equipment was a mess. I took my equipment apart and checked it out. It seemed to be working okay, but one could tell that it had seen better days. On 8 February 1944 we crossed the equator, making me and the rest of the crew full-fledged SHELLBACKS.

ROBERT L. CONRAD, Company B

We boarded the *USS Epping Forest* on February 4 for a splendid trip to Guadalcanal. En route we crossed the equator and went through the "Shellback" initiation. No more polliwogs in our outfit. It was nice to feel that all the stigma attached to the term *boot*, used by some of the old salts, had now been left behind.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

On February 7, aboard the *USS DuPage*, we crossed the equator, and the very special order (shown on Page 100) was issued. There was quite a party, with the officers dressed and painted in their various roles. To be initiated as a trusty shellback, we had

FROM: The Commanding Officer
TO: All officers and men under my command
SUBJECT: The boarding of this vessel by the Royal Scribe,
Davy Jones, and the reception of His Imperial
Majesty, Neptunus Rex
REFERENCE: The Traditions of the Seven Seas

1. Word has been received by radio that about 1800 on Feb 7, 1944, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of His Imperial Majesty, Neptunus Rex, His Honor, Royal Scribe Davy Jones, will board this vessel.
2. At the specified time, all hands shall maintain a sharp lookout and shall report to me any evidence of the approach of His Honor, Davy Jones.
3. All formalities shall be observed, and every effort will be made to please and placate His Majesty's closest friend, advisor, and high counsellor, the Royal Scribe, Davy Jones.
4. Following the visit of the Royal Scribe, it is expected that His Imperial Majesty, Neptunus Rex, Emperor of the Deep, will board this vessel at about 0800, Feb 8, 1944.
5. On arrival, His Majesty will assume charge of this vessel. All persons shall strictly execute his commands under pain of his displeasure.
6. In honor of His Majesty and royal entourage, 8 February 1944 is hereby declared a holiday.
7. On the above date all shellbacks shall be relieved of watch and duty.
8. All initiates shall be warned to have their names checked off by the royal scribes.
9. As a special warning, it is desired to point out that it is particularly dangerous to landlubbers to flirt with the royal princess or, worse still, with the queen. The royal babies may not be teased.

G. M. WAUCHOPE
Captain, U.S.N.R.
Commanding Officer

to perform various silly acts. One was going through the paddle line. But we all received our card.

On February 10 we arrived in the Ellice Islands. Lying in the harbor there was miserable. Everyone seemed to be on edge, the chow was terrible, and the heat was almost unbearable. On February 14 we left the Ellice Islands bound for Guadalcanal.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

About four days after leaving the Marshalls we anchored at Funafuti Atoll in the Ellice Islands, shown on modern maps as Tuvalu. We didn't get off the ship while there. We started talking to crew members of a merchant ship anchored next to us, shouting between ships and exchanging greetings. Next thing I knew the merchant crewmen started throwing candy bars at us. Real nice guys to give us their pogie bait. We didn't stay at Funafuti very long, leaving there for Guadalcanal, BSI.

BYRON G. SNEVA, Company C

On February 10 we anchored in the lagoon of Funafuti Atoll in the Ellice Islands and stayed there for more than a week. The airstrip there was really busy, with planes landing and taking off all the time. One day I watched a PBM try to take off from the water with a heavy load. He finally made it after five thrilling tries. There were no docks, so most of us stayed aboard ship, out in the lagoon, the whole time. On February 11, however, Harry B. Granlee, Richard P. Greene and some others went ashore and came back saying the Marines stationed there didn't have much. They had to catch all their washing water from the rain, or wash in the ocean, because they could distill only enough for drinking water. I bought ice cream from the ship's store for 25 cents, the first I had had since leaving the States. It sure was good. Another time I got some stuff from ship service through Lieutenant Thomas T. Oyler—six cigars, two bars of candy, and some matches. On February 12 some of us went swimming off the stern gate. The water was almost too warm. Some natives paddled out in their outriggers to sell carvings to the swabbies. On February 14 Robert W. Pierce, Theard L. Mayeaux, and a lot of other guys were transferred to a transport (the *DuPage*). The last night in the Funafuti harbor was beautiful. Everybody was topside watching the tropical hues float around the islands, then turn into a clear starry night. We left Funafuti at about 1400 on February 17.

ANCIENT ORDER OF THE DEEP

This is to certify that

FLATTUM, L. M.

has been gathered to our fold and duly initiated as a trusty shellback, having crossed the equator on board the United States Ship *DuPage* bound from Hawaiian

Islands to the equator 7 February, 1944, Latitude 00 00 00, Longitude (War Zone)

Davy Jones
His Majesty's
Scribe

Neptunus Rex
Ruler of the
Raging Main

Shellback certification card

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

On LSD-4 we went from Kwajalein to the Ellice Islands, where we lay over a few days before continuing south. We were not allowed ashore. The chow aboard was lousy, the heat was terrific, and nearly every day there were intermittent showers. My buddy and I slept topside under a tractor to at least keep dry. It was nice and cool under there too, but you couldn't sit up. Sometimes when I turned over I would bang my head against the hull. I hadn't received any mail since leaving Hawaii. I spent quite a bit of time writing letters and reading and, for three days, had mess duty in the galley.

Our platoon leader, Lieutenant Irwin Ronald Buckner, told us that we were headed for the Solomon Islands and lectured us on malaria prevention and protection.



First Armored officers on LSD-5: Lieutenants Luke E. Burch, Thomas M. Crosby, Thomas T. Oylar, Robert V. Denney, and William L. Eubank.

EDWARD G. RIZKALLA, Company C

I saw many beautiful scenes in the Pacific in two years out there, but one of the most beautiful was the sunsets. When the red sun would sink into the blue water, it gave you a most unforgettable scene of magenta or purple water. I have tried to describe it to my wife, but couldn't. You have to see it for yourself.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

When we came in sight of land after leaving Funafuti, many of the veterans of the Solomons campaign began to recognize and point out such landmarks and seascapes as Savo Island, Florida Island, the "Slot," Tulagi, and Guadalcanal. The *Epping Forest* flooded her ballast tanks, lowered the well deck gate, and discharged our am tanks into the waters of the Slot off Guadalcanal's Tetere Beach. We drove ashore to find an advance party well along toward the construction of our new First Armored base, Camp McCartney.

CHAPTER SEVEN

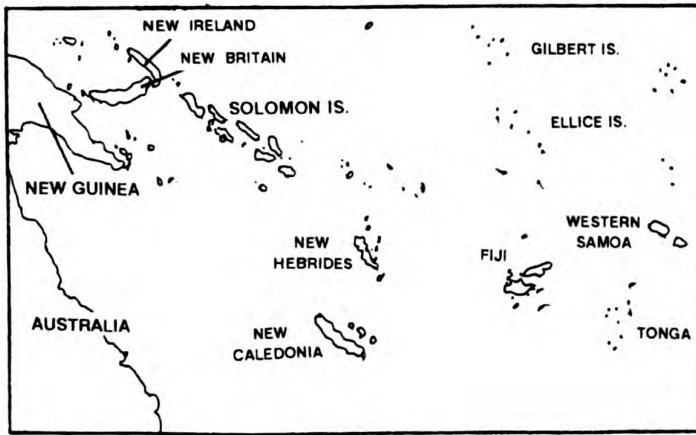
Guadalcanal the First Time

Guadalcanal, which in February 1944 became the new home of the First Armored Amphibian Battalion, is the second largest of the Solomon Islands. The Solomons are a 700-miles-long archipelago of mostly mountainous islands, much different from the atolls the First Armored had seen in the Marshall and Ellice Islands. They have a total land area of more than 22,000 square miles, with jungle-covered mountains as high as 8,000 feet. The largest islands are Bougainville, Choiseul, New Georgia, Santa Isabel, Guadalcanal, Malaita, and San Cristobal. Some smaller islands, where history was made in World War II, are Tulagi, Florida, Savo, Vella Lavella, Kolombangara, and the Russells group. There are hundreds of other small islands and atolls. A channel, 280 miles long and 30 to 50 miles wide, and in World War II nicknamed the Slot, runs southeastward from Bougainville through the Solomons. At its lower end it passes between Guadalcanal on one side and Tulagi and Florida on the other. Most of the native islanders are Melanesian. The climate is hot, humid, and unhealthful.

Guadalcanal and other islands in the Solomons were first seen by Europeans when the Spanish explorer, Álvaro de Mendaña, visited them in 1567. It was he who bestowed the names Solomon and Guadalcanal, among others. Little or nothing came of that contact, however, and the Solomons went almost unnoticed by Europeans for about three centuries. Not till the late 1800s did trading and missionary activity develop sufficiently to attract the attention of governments. In the 1890s Great Britain proclaimed the islands a British protectorate. In the 20th century large coconut groves were planted by Lever Brothers and other soap companies for the production of copra.

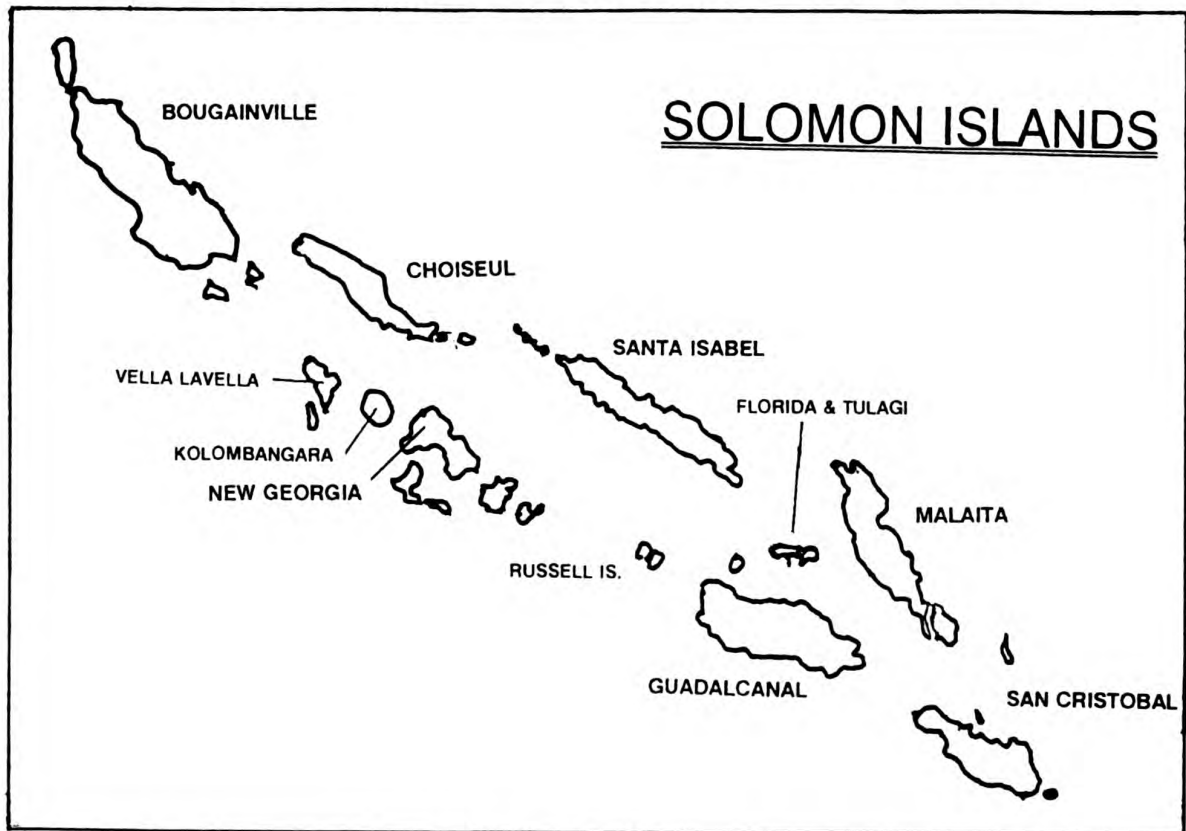
Guadalcanal has an area of 2180 square miles, is 92 miles long and, at its widest

part, is 33 miles wide. A spine of high, rugged, razorback mountains, covered with rain forests, make it virtually impossible to cross the island by land. The southern coast of Guadalcanal is rocky, stormy, and inhospitable. A wide alluvial plain, however, stretches



along the northern coast—reaching more than 10 miles inland in some places. Short rivers flow down from the mountains, across the plain, through coastal swamps, to the sea. Much of the northern plain has jungle and swamps, but in normal times that is where the native population lives and coconut palms are cultivated. It was also on this jungly, swampy plain that the First Marine Division fought, Henderson Field

was taken, and the Japanese were repulsed. There were still reminders in February 1944 of the desperate battles fought between August 1942 and February 1943. The grimmest relics were the rusted hulks of U.S. and Japanese ships aground offshore or beached in what had come to be called "Iron Bottom Sound." When the First Armored arrived, a

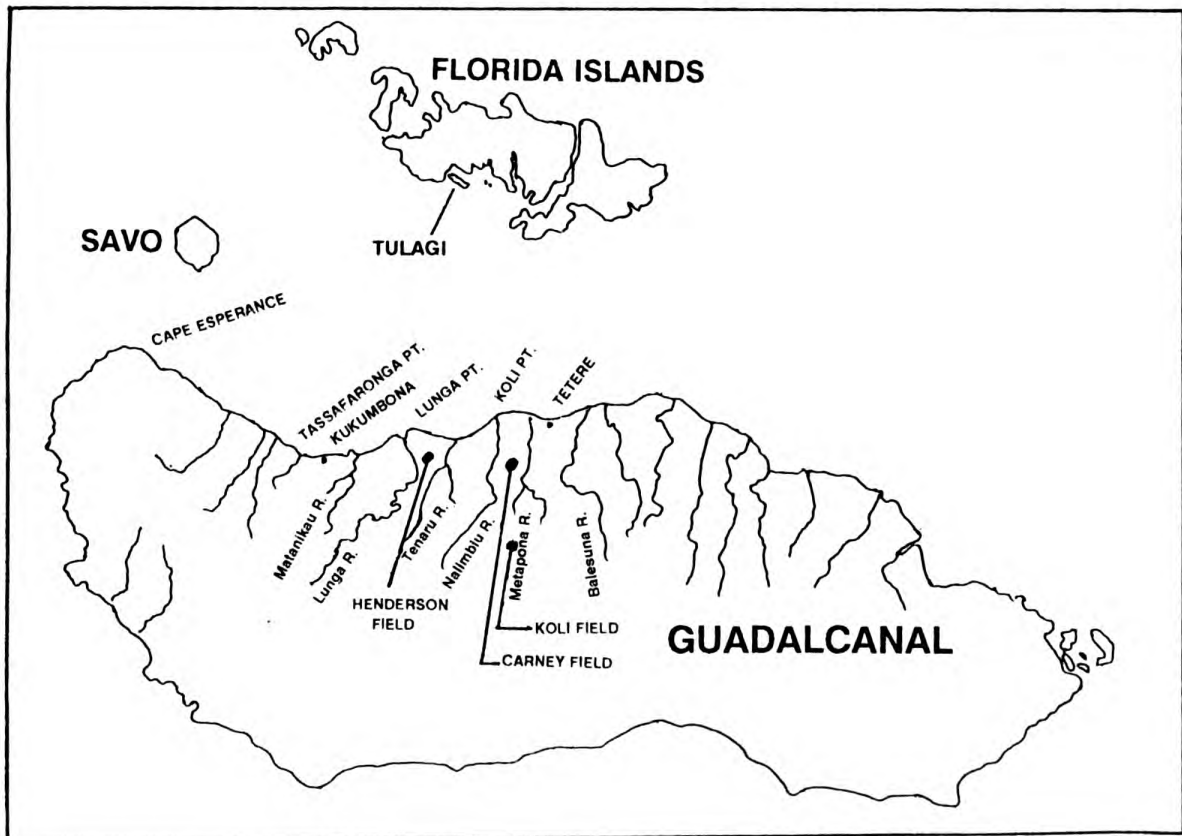


year after the Japanese evacuation, Guadalcanal had been transformed into a bustling rear base for operations northward against the enemy.

Only 9 or 10 degrees south of the equator, the climate on Guadalcanal is hot, rainfall is copious, and diseases abound. Though rainfall is heavier in summer—from December through March—it averages about 80 inches a year in the coastal plain. Common diseases include malaria, dysentery, yaws, hookworm, filariasis, and what the Marines called "Jungle Rot." Voracious mosquitos are a nuisance and a hazard. Flying and crawling life thrives in abundance and in great variety.

BUILDING CAMP McCARTNEY

The Battalion advance party, which had left Funafuti early aboard the *USS DuPage*, were put ashore on Tetere Beach on Friday, February 18. A site a little inland from the beach was selected and, with few tools, the men began work hacking away the jungle and building a camp. Tetere Beach was on Guadalcanal's north shore about 15 miles by road east of Henderson Field, the center of U.S. activity on the island. Behind the camp was a large open field of head-high kunai grass, west was Cavaga Lagoon, and east was a dirt road leading inland from the beach. The 4th Amphibian Tractor Battalion set up their camp across that road from us. The Metapona River was only about a



half mile to the west and the Balesuna River not much farther to the east. The jungle and the sea were always intimately present. From Tetere Beach we could see across the waters of the Slot to Tulagi and Florida Islands.

The remainder of the Battalion arrived off Tetere Beach on Tuesday, February 22, and the next day debarked from the LSDs and came ashore in their am tanks. They too joined in the work of building the camp. That same day there was a mail call and, in the evening, a movie in the adjacent 4th Amtrac camp. At a general assembly soon after, Major Metzger reviewed the state of the Battalion and its prospects for future actions. He also announced the name, Camp McCartney, honoring Sergeant William T. McCartney of Company A, killed in action in the Roi landing.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

We arrived on Guadalcanal in poor shape from having just completed a combat operation, having lost a goodly number of our LVTAs, being aboard ship where only limited maintenance was possible, and lacking all the normal equipment and supplies. I reported to the Commanding General (Major General Roy Geiger), III Amphibious

SOME GUADALCANAL GEOGRAPHY

Tetere Beach	Site of Camp McCartney.
Cavaga Lagoon	Half encircling Camp McCartney.
Rivers	Metapona, Balesuna, Matanikau, Tenaru, Lunga, Nalimbiu.
Airfields	Henderson Field, Koli Field, Carney Field.
Navy docks/beaches	Kukum Point, Kukumbona, Point Cruz, Lunga Point.
Service Men's Center	Near Henderson Field.
Coconut Grove	Site of 3d Marine Division camp.
Ironbottom Sound	Officially Sealark Channel. The waters between Guadalcanal and Florida Islands, so called from the many Japanese and American ships sunk there in the Battle of Savo Island and subsequent naval battles. A part of the Slot.
The Slot	Nickname for the channel through the Solomons from Bougainville to Guadalcanal. Route of Japanese naval incursions in early Solomons combat.
Savo	Volcanic island 7 miles off the northwest coast of Guadalcanal. The naval battles of August 1942 and later dates left many sunken ships in waters around Savo.
Florida	Island visible from Tetere Beach, about 13 miles across Ironbottom Sound.
Tulagi	Very small island adjacent to Florida, but with a deep harbor and in 1944 an important Naval base.
Anchorage at Tulagi	Tulagi Harbor, Hutcheson's Creek, Purvis Bay.
Hutcheson's Shoals	First Armored waterborne firing area.
Cape Esperance and Tassafaronga Beach	Area in western part of Guadalcanal's north coast where the Battalion participated in maneuvers prior to departure for Guam and Okinawa.
Note: Spellings often vary and, since Solomon independence, some names have changed completely.	

Corps and was informed we had to be ready in 30 days for an operation on Kavieng, New Ireland.

Along with the commanding officer of the 4th Amphibian Tractor Battalion I was taken to Tetere Beach and shown a patch of jungle and told to build a camp there. We had no tools, no tents, no mess equipment, nothing but LVTs, our men, and two jeeps. The lieutenant colonel picked the first site, nearest the road, and I got what was left; but that was fortunate. The area was jungle, but it bordered on Cavaga Lagoon and was backed by a large field of kunai grass. The soil was sandy. With the few tools we were able to scrounge we set to with brush hooks, machetes, and axes and built a super camp, with tents lined under the trees. The open field became the maintenance area, and the lagoon was useful in washing off the vehicles after they came out of the salty sea. Our communicators installed a radio and speakers "borrowed" from our vehicles so that during off-duty hours and weekends we had music camp wide.

TED "ZIP" SHEPPARD, Company D

In the advance party we arrived at Guadalcanal at 1500 on February 18 and landed in Higgins boats on Tetere Beach. We spent the night on the beach with a lot of mosquitos. We worked the next few days in the tough job of cutting away jungle and thickets to make a clearing for a camp. The jungle was very thick, and progress was slow, working only with hatchets and machetes, but we finally got tents up.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

The advance party moved right into the jungle which was to be our home. It was a tough terrain, with rolling, twisting hills, thick with jungle, tangled underbrush and high thick grass. The beach was sandy with calm surf. By hand we chopped away trees, the thick tangled underbrush, everything. I became quite proficient with the machete, and that was the beginning of the hardest, toughest training I had in all the time I was in the Marines.

ROBERT W. PIERCE, Company A

At Guadalcanal we learned that the "rest camp" we were to enjoy would be built by us—from scratch! In columns of three, we marched upshore a few hundred yards from where the Navy dropped us off, took a "left face" and were looking at our future home, a maze of jungle vines and foliage clinging to coconut trees.

Part of our combat pack contents were shovels (for fox holes) and machetes (for clearing wooded areas). We used those tools to clear the jungle and make ready for a camp. After a couple of days our enterprising leaders managed to beg, borrow, or steal additional shovels, rakes and hoes to supplement the crude tools we had started with. One Marine captured a colorful creature which closely resembled an iguana. It was an eerie looking specimen, about the size of a large cat. We simply tied a rope around its

neck, tied it to a tree, gave it a name—Banzai, I think it was called—and then figured out what to feed it.

Coconut logs were cut and dropped into two-foot footings to frame the tents and form the outline of the camp. Six-man tent tarps were draped from center poles approximately ten feet high to logs strung four feet high along the sides and back of the tent. An opening was left in front for passage.

MAYER S. GOLDBERG, Company D

I was in the advance party of about 100 men that started building our camp at Tetere Beach. I worked harder than I can remember and decided then that I would never go into the construction business.

GEORGE LEGINO, Company B

While the advance party cleared jungle and underbrush for the camp area, we uncovered many Japanese remains and weapons from previous fighting on Guadalcanal.

RALPH E. HAUTH, Company A

Because our tank, A-7, had been knocked out by gunfire, we were in the advance party. On Guadalcanal we started setting up a camp using only shovels and axes from the tanks. We slept in pup tents. While working there one day we found skeletons of two Marines. We called Grave Registration, but heard no more about them.

BYRON G. SNEVA, Company C

On February 22 our convoy arrived in the famous Islands of Solomon. All around us we could see the battleground: Savo, Tulagi, Guadalcanal. Then we sailed up to the Guadalcanal shore just off Henderson Field, where they took some of our gear ashore, but we didn't go in with it. We put in to shore at about 0730 the next morning, on Wednesday the 23d. Our camp was a jungle, with sultry jungle streams coming down to the sea. We found our canvas tents already partially pitched. Some of the boys who had come on the transport had arrived five days ahead of us and had virtually hacked out space for the whole Battalion. We started to do the same as soon as we got ashore. The brush was really thick, with palm trees as thick as the hair on a dog. Our tent had a stream for a front yard and a jungle for the back door. The ocean was only fifty yards in front of us. The heat was terrible during the day, but the mornings and evenings were wonderful. Every kind of insect thrived there. The bay was swell to swim in. That first day I went swimming twice and, the biggest thrill of all, I got three letters from home. That evening I listened to music from the nearby outdoor movie and to the sound of planes taking off by the numbers from Henderson Field.

In the early days I was on work details such as chopping down palms and bamboo to build the mess tent and property tent, cutting out stumps, fixing up our own tents, clearing brush from the edge of the lagoon, and other jobs to build the camp.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

About sixteen days after leaving the Marshalls we arrived at our new home on Guadalcanal in the beautiful British Solomon Islands, the land of land crabs, mosquitos, malaria, coconuts, sunshine, rain, lizards, monkeys, high humidity, and much more. Once the ship was anchored we said our good-byes to the Epping Forest and proceeded to fire up our tanks and start for shore. For us to get the tanks off the tank deck, it was necessary for the LSD to first take on water as ballast, putting the tank deck under water so that we could float off. Much more comfortable than the LST and its ramp. We headed for Tetere Beach and our new home.

When we landed and arrived at our camp area, all I saw was jungle, vines, undergrowth, and lots of hard work ahead. The advance party had started work on the Battalion camp area, but it seemed they hadn't got as far as D Company yet. I believe that D Company lucked out because our camp site was at the end of the Battalion area near the Cavaga Lagoon.

Using machetes, shovels, hoes, hands, etc. we had a pretty good camp in short order. It didn't take as long as I thought. About twenty feet from the lagoon some of the men dug a well that served as our source of water for washing clothes and gave us a good way to take a bath. You could get a bucket of water, pour it over yourself, soap down, then a few more buckets to wash the soap off. Hooray! We could use all the water we wanted, just like stateside. The drinking water was trucked in, and each company area had a couple of lister bags as the source of supply.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

On February 23 we left LSD-4, landed on Guadalcanal, and set up in a camp there. For the first time since leaving the States the whole Battalion was together again. Also that day we received our first mail since leaving Kauai. On the 24th at a general assembly, Major Metzger complimented us on the Marshalls campaign. The camp, he said, was to be named Camp McCartney after Sergeant William T. McCartney, a tank commander in A Company, killed in the Marshalls. McCartney and I had come out from New River together. The Major told us that we had one operation behind us and about ten ahead of us, and that the rest of the time on Guadalcanal would be spent building the camp and working on our tanks for future operations.

WILLIAM D. GERMAIN, Company B

I don't know how many million coconut trees we cut down to make a camp. We put the tents in A Company on different levels, something like steps. Our row of tents was near the lagoon.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

We started to work right away clearing the underbrush and setting up tents. Just about everything you looked at there had legs and moved. And there were plenty of mosquitos. We had K rations for chow. We had mail call the first day, the first since Kauai, and I got two letters from my wife, Liz. Mail was really backlogged. The second day I got five letters from Liz and two from my mother, and on the third day ten letters and cards from Liz.

DONALD C. HOUSTON, Company B

After our arrival on Guadalcanal I went on a working party to help unload the LSD that had brought us. It was my first experience boarding a ship by cargo net. It wasn't too bad going up but, with a strong swell running, it was some fun exiting.

ROBERT L. CONRAD, Company B

Building Camp McCartney was quite an experience for most of us. To put up tents we bulldozed the palms for the corner posts and connecting sides, dug post holes, and slapped mosquitos. During this entire process, the capricious rains poured down. One of my fondest memories was getting inside the tent when we finally got it up.

JOSEPH VOIGT, Company D

When building Camp McCartney on Guadalcanal, George Roberts and I became very good friends. We did many things together, including cutting down trees for the chaplain to build a chapel. George used to amaze me with his ability to handle an axe. He could fell a tree while I was standing there looking at him. George was built like a tank, and that's a compliment.

RICHARD ZENGER, Company D

Camp McCartney was organized into company areas. There was a mess hall, a maintenance area for the tanks, a small Battalion office. Because it was pretty hot, we cut palm trees and built frameworks between the tents so that the sides could be rolled up to get better air circulation. D Company was farthest up the beach away from Battalion headquarters and near the tank maintenance area. CP staff soon installed speakers throughout the tent area so that we could hear the Armed Forces Radio Service broadcasts and occasionally Tokyo Rose. We also built a movie area and a softball field. The movie was a covered projection booth and a screen with a small stage in front of it. Seating was on benches, although some individuals were more innovative. For instance, Joe (Joseph C.) Baumbach, Howard W. Van Kessel, and Donald Scharf scrounged a truck seat which they mounted on high legs at the rear of the area. We saw a couple of films a week and two or three USO live shows during our time on Guadalcanal.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

The First Armored was in a strip of jungle perhaps 300 yards inland from a sandy beach in the Tetere area. Starting on the east was H&S Company area, then the other four companies running in an east-west line, with D Company at the end. There was plenty of breathing room separating each company from the others. Each company had two company streets for its three platoons, i.e., one platoon's tents faced its own street, the other two sharing a common street. The streets were dirt, of course, raked fresh each morning. In A Company, because of a slight hill, each row of tents was on a higher grade than the others. Many tall trees provided shade, but not *too* much shade, as you wanted as few mosquitos as possible. Each company's lister bag hung down near the company headquarters tent. Our tents were the standard six-man pyramidal type. To increase the protection from rain and, more importantly, to allow any cooling breeze to circulate, the side flaps around the whole tent were securely tied up to horizontal coconut logs three feet or more from the ground. The total company area was made roomier and much more comfortable by this procedure.



Company Street, Company C, Camp McCartney, Guadalcanal (Rizkalla)

KAVIENG BYPASSED

The First Armored was allowed only about three weeks for either camp building or rest. On March 5 Company A was attached temporarily to the 40th Army Division for maneuvers off the northeast coast of Guadalcanal. On March 10, Major Metzger announced at a general assembly that the Battalion would participate in the invasion of Kavieng, an important Japanese air base on New Ireland in the Bismarck Archipelago. Preparations began for maneuvers with the 3d Marine Division. Taking Kavieng was planned as a step toward the capture of the Japanese superbase of Rabaul. That was

not to be, however. On March 12 the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued orders canceling the operation. Both Rabaul and Kavieng were to be bypassed, an important decision in the developing strategy of neutralizing, bypassing, and isolating Japanese strongholds. The next major target for invasion would be the Marianas. On March 16 Major Metzger announced that the invasion was off and the maneuvers canceled.

BYRON G. SNEVA, Company C

On Friday, March 10, Company A went out on maneuvers with the Army's 40th Division and stayed away for four days. Also on that Friday we had a general assembly and learned that we were to attack Kavieng soon and secure the South Pacific. That was good news to me, for we were looking for something to do. In the next days we went to school on the Kavieng attack (with aerial photos) and on snipers and ambush. Overhead we could hear B-24s and B-25s leaving on bombing missions to the very place we were going to. Then, on Thursday, March 16, we got the news the operation to Kavieng had been called off. That meant we had to stay in this hole for more time, more inspections, and more time to have nothing to do. It didn't sit well with me at all, for I was looking forward to new battles and new lands, and then to going home.

WILLIAM D. GERMAIN, Company A

They showed us maps of Kavieng and a line of swamps there that had to be crossed. They found similar swamps on the Canal. In our practice landing, we charged ashore, inland, and into the swamps. I can't remember how far we penetrated into the swamp, only that we all got stuck in what was no more than liquid mud, or muck I guess it would be called. The bottom was too soft for traction, and we were stuck. We worked for what seemed like three days, wading in muck chest-deep. We attached cables to trees and to our tracks, and then pulled ourselves out only a track length at a time. That was quite a mess. I thank the Lord it was only a maneuver and not combat. We would all have been sitting ducks, and I'm sure we wouldn't have lived to tell about it. We were not at all disappointed when that landing was canceled!

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

We also started training for Kavieng. The Operation Plan of the 3d Marine Division for that operation was poorly conceived. Our battalion, together with the 3d Tank Battalion, was to land on the reef on D-Day minus one. We were then to fire at the landing beaches and their defenses for one day. That night we were to withdraw to some islands on the edge of the reef. The following day we were to lead the assault on the objective area. There is no doubt any Japanese forces in the area would be alerted where we were planning to land and move to defend the objective. If that operation had been carried out, the casualties would have been high. Fortunately, the operation was canceled, and elements of the 3d Marine Division landed on Emirau instead, an unopposed operation (which I was at as an observer).

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

About three weeks after arriving on Guadalcanal, we were informed of a coming operation, the Kavieng Peninsula on New Ireland. We had lectures, movies, and map classes in preparation for the campaign. A few days later the operation was called off. It was very unusual for the troops to be told the destination of a campaign before boarding ship. So when the New Ireland campaign was called off, I thought the original announcement was a fake, hoping to mislead the enemy and cause them to move troops to reenforce their position. Forty-nine years later I learned that there was indeed a plan for the campaign to take place, but was called off as far as we were concerned.

REBUILDING THE BATTALION

After the losses at Kwajalein the Battalion needed replacements in men and equipment. And it needed the specialists and equipment left with its rear echelon back in California. The rear echelon sailed from San Diego on four separate ships on different dates in late January and early February. It reformed on Maui in the Territory of Hawaii and continued there until March 1, when it put to sea on LSD-2. Men and equipment arrived on Guadalcanal and rejoined the Battalion on about March 18.

At about the same time we received new LVTA-1s to replace our losses and, by the end of March, new men as well. Most of the replacement personnel arrived on Guadalcanal in the 41st Replacement Battalion and had stories to tell of a long voyage, at the end of which they were assigned to the First Armored.

BYRON G. SNEVA, Company C

On March 18 the rear echelon arrived from the States, bringing forty replacement tanks with them. I was called out at 1900 on a work party to unload rear echelon gear from LSD-3. The gear was stacked 20 feet high, 100 feet long, and 75 feet wide and looked like it had been pushed up by a bulldozer. There was a lot of breakage and signs of pilfering. We worked all night and at 0700 the next morning were fed a big breakfast of dehydrated eggs, prunes, and C rations. Another crew relieved us and worked all day. Some of the men in the rear echelon got court-martials for being AWOL when we left the States. On March 31 the First Armored got some personnel replacements from the 41st Replacement Battalion, five men coming to C Company.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

Our motor transport vehicles (many in poor repair as they had been overused by the 4th Marine Division), supplies, and equipment finally caught up with us. Replacement armored amphibians arrived, and training started in earnest.

ORVILLE HOUDEK, Company D

I enlisted in the Marine Corps from the small town of Cuba, Kansas, and was sworn in on August 14, 1943 in Kansas City, Missouri. After boot camp in San Diego, I was transferred to Jacques' Farm, the tank school outside San Diego. I didn't go from there directly into the First Armored. Instead, I was shipped, as a medium tank operator, from Camp Pendleton to the 41st Replacement Battalion, and went overseas with that unit. We left San Diego in early 1944 and, after many days at sea, went ashore at Guadalcanal. I spent many weeks in the 41st Replacement Battalion on various work details such as unloading supplies from cargo ships. Only after about three months of that, was I transferred to the First Armored Amphibian Battalion.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

I volunteered for enlistment in the Marine Corps in May or early June of 1943, at the age of 17, but my actual induction wasn't until June 25, and I wasn't ordered to active duty till September 17. My journey from Battle Creek to San Diego was a four-day train ride. I survived the shock, rigors, and indignities of boot camp and qualified as sharpshooter on the rifle range. After graduation I was assigned to infantry school at Camp Elliott on Kearny Mesa, and signed up for light machine gun training. After two months I had fired expert on the machine gun and was assigned to the 41st Replacement Battalion, standing by to be shipped out overseas.

On January 22, 1944, we arrived at the docks in San Diego and boarded the *SS President Tyler*, a decrepit old merchant marine ship. Bunks on that greasy, crowded tub were of canvas, stacked four high. There was fresh water only for drinking, and sometimes not for that. The *President Tyler* was the worst ship I have ever been on. I had guard duty for the entire trip to the South Pacific. We pulled into Noumea in New Caledonia on February 12 and stayed there, aboard ship, for six days. A few days out of Noumea, we arrived at Guadalcanal on February 22.

We happily left the *President Tyler*, climbing down on cargo nets to Higgins boats for a ride to a sandy beach in the Tassafaronga area of Guadalcanal. We used our shelter halves to set up tents for the first few nights. The next day we were marched a few miles eastward along the coast and set up a more permanent camp, where we would stay for the next five weeks. Some of the men in the 41st Replacement Battalion got duty unloading supply ships harbored at Kukumbona, but I got mess duty for about a month, all through March.

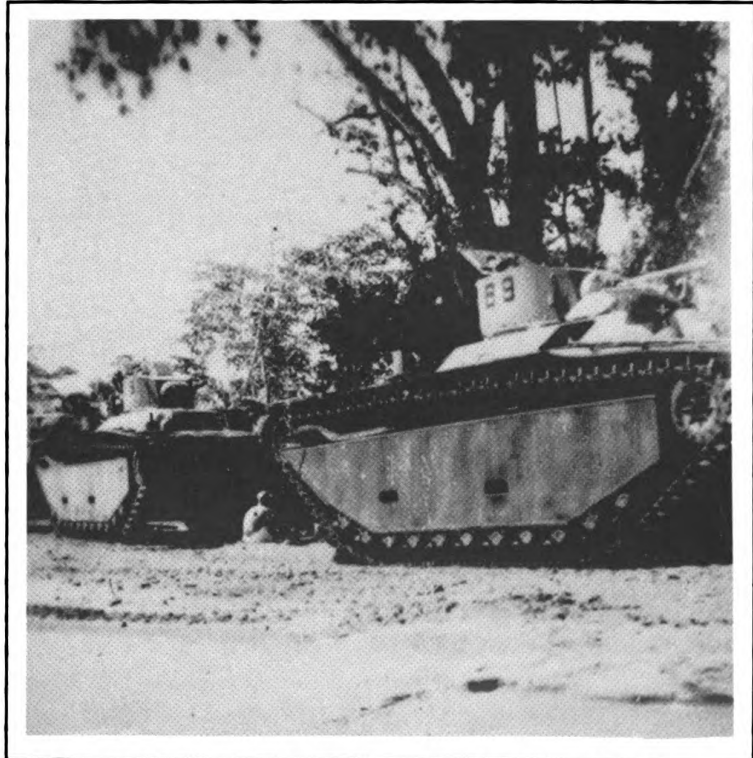
On April 1, 1944, eight or ten of us were called up and given orders which resulted in our being trucked to our new home, the First Armored Amphibian Battalion on Tetere Beach. Of those men, the only names I can remember now are William L. Aydelotte, Leland K. DeLauer, Robert E. Allison, and George P. Christopoulos. DeLauer would later be wounded in the initial assault on Guam, and Allison and Christopoulos killed there. We were all machine gunners. Aydelotte, Allison and I were assigned to A Company, DeLauer to B, and Christopoulos to D.

TRAINING AND WORK

Even before the Kavieng excitement, and never ceasing after that, the Battalion prepared for its next engagement. On February 28, 1944, Major Metzger initiated an intensive training schedule, covering maintenance of tanks and weapons, land tank tactics, use of weapons, formation driving, map reading, and first aid. At the same time both tanks and tank crews had to be restored. The amtanks brought down to Guadalcanal had survived Kwajalein, but most were battered or in poor running condition from the rigors of combat. Tanks, guns, and radios required a lot of work from both maintenance personnel and tank crews. New men in the Battalion were assigned to tank crews to bring them up to strength. Also, in keeping with First Armored policy, when men wanted to change jobs, they were allowed to do so.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

Our training then consisted of practicing different types of formations in approaching a beach, utilizing the terrain, and providing maximum firepower while making ourselves the least target possible. This last was a hope, not a fact. In order to cover unforeseen circumstances, we did cross-training so that any of us could step into another's position with a halfway degree of confidence and skill. We had firing exercises both with the cannon and the machine guns, both on the water and ashore. Much maneuvering was also performed in the jungle on a platoon or company scale. Water, rations, and our packs could be carried inside the tank so that, generally speaking, we could remain less wet and live a bit more comfortably than infantrymen.



Company B amtanks on Guadalcanal after Kwajalein (Pierce)

Upon my arrival as a replacement in the First Armored, I was assigned to Tank A-10, in the 2d Platoon of A Company. A-10's crew consisted of Corporal Larry (George L.) Good as tank commander; PFC Bill (William J.) Carroll, driver; PFC Bob

(Robert W.) Pierce, radio operator and machine gunner; PFC Earl L. Gray on the starboard machine gun; and I on the port machine gun. When, later, we made the assault on Guam, we had Sergeant Elmer Morris, from Ordnance, as our cannoneer and Corporal Dan (Daniel E.) Montgomery, from Maintenance, as ammunition passer.

ORVILLE HOUDEK, Company D

My first sight of an amphibian tank was on the next morning after I first joined the First Armored on Guadalcanal. They took several men from the replacement group



Tank Park. Company D amtanks, Camp McCartney. (Paul)

out to the tank park, then out in the ocean, where we took turns at driving. Back in camp they called us to the Company commander's office. I was assigned as driver for tank D-14. Leo F. Nolan was the tank commander, Joe (Joseph B.) Logue the CP, Bill (William C.) Moir the gunner. Harold K. Miller was also in the crew. After two weeks, however, I was transferred to D-12. The crew consisted of Burnard

W. Sommers as tank commander, Russell C. Murphy the CP, Houdek the driver, Andrew A. Norton the gunner, Paul R. De Santis the assistant gunner, and Richard L. Warp the ammunition passer.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

On March 6 we went on a little maneuver devoted mostly to practice driving and 37mm gunner practice.

GEORGE F. ROBERTS, Company D

We had maneuvers one day off some tiny island near our camp. There were empty drums on the very white coral for us to fire at. I got a severe headache from the glare on that day.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

Every man could perform all the duties of other crew members, and boredom was fought off by allowing changes in duties. Before the days of Pentagon micromanagement, and at the end of a long line of communication, a battalion commander really commanded his unit. If a truck driver wanted to become a gunner, or a barber a crew member, or a crew member a mechanic, it took only an authorization for the change by the company or battalion commander. The paramount—the *only*—criterion was the ability to carry out successfully combat assignments.

Night training was stressed and, although an armored unit, infantry training was routinely given. Everyone took training seriously. All knew that ahead lay further desperate battles, and that the road to survival lay in well-trained individuals and units.

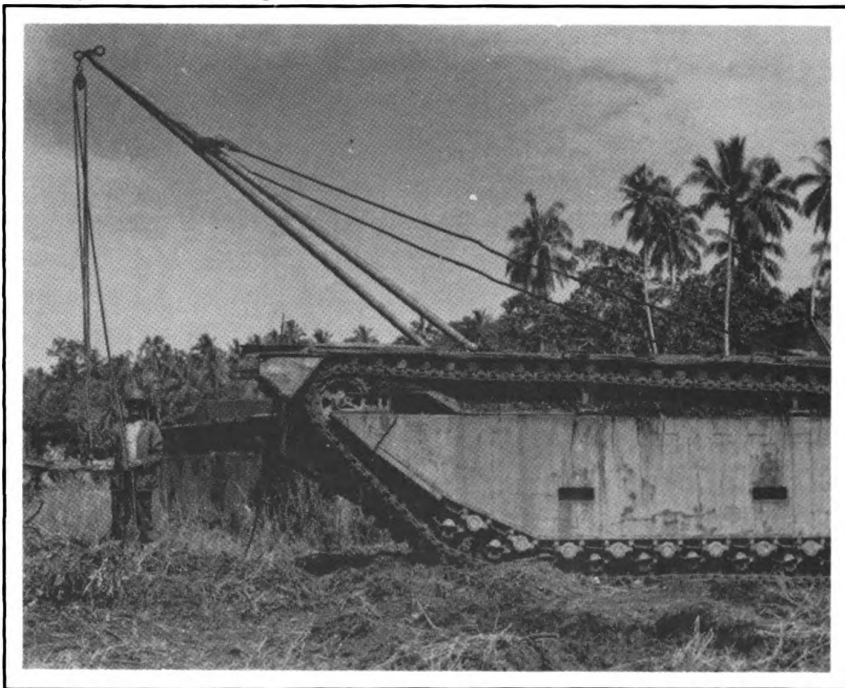
WILLIAM MOIR, Company D

We got a new D-14 tank, new weapons, and some new men. Leo F. Nolan was the new

tank commander and Joe (Joseph B.) Logue the radio operator. Doc (Derk A.) Vloedman became the 37mm gunner and Harold K. Miller a machine gunner. I was the other machine gunner. At first we got Bud (Orville B.) Houdek, a replacement and a heck of a nice guy, as driver, then Clarence O. Haselden.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

I got into steady tank maintenance on Guadalcanal before the first week was out: the transmission on D-8, the final drive on D-4 and D-17, the clutch on D-7. There was other work like cleaning up spare parts. After the Kavieng operation was canceled, the other maintenance men and I settled back into keeping the tanks in running condition—pulling transmissions, tightening carburetors, overhauling "Little Joes." On March 24 a crew chief took the Company D tractor out for a test run, forgot to put the hull plug in, and took a lot of water on board.



Maintenance tractor. Sgt. William O. Roecker demonstrates the boom on an LVT (2). (Paul)

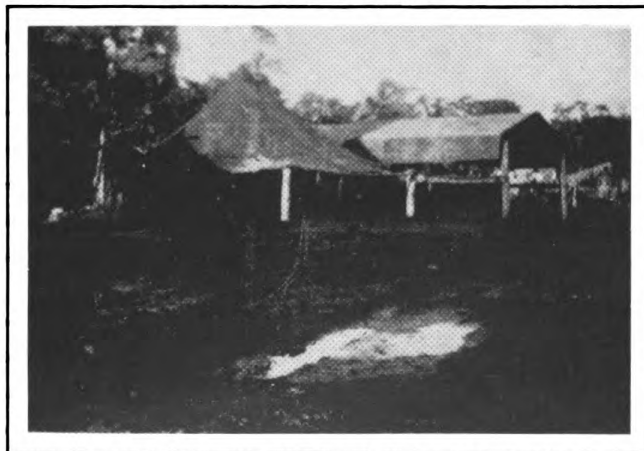
DONALD L. FERCHAU, Company A

As soon as we got settled at Camp McCartney on Guadalcanal we had a shake-up in the A-17 crew. Ralph E. "Pinky" Pope replaced Harvard V. "Bunky" Miller as driver, and Oliver T. "Bangor" Dowling took Bob (Robert E.) Carroll's place as one of the .30-caliber machine gunners. The rest of us had no change: Larry E. Merritt as tank commander, Thomas I. "Whitey" Coleman as CP, William D. "Willy" Germain as 37mm gunner, and I as the other .30-caliber gunner.

Because our tank park backed up against a swamp, we had to back the tanks in carefully. And several times, when we were cleaning machine guns, the rods and springs flew straight as arrows into that swamp. With rust, corrosion, and mud daubers always a problem, we applied cosmoline and oil heavily and always made sure to close the chambers and plug the ends of our pieces.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

Ever the productive artist, Art (Arthur M.) Cochran took an idea of tank commander Al (Allen A.) Kroyer's and created a sign identifying his crew's tent as "Bachelor's Hall—For Old Maids to Call." As a "maintenance-type" CP, I was quartered a short distance inland at the Company maintenance area. I shared a tent with Tech Sergeant Eugene Kemp "Windy" Winchester and Staff Sergeant Thomas A. "Squeaky" Timmons. Nearby were tents occupied by tank mechanics and their shops.



Comm and Maintenance shacks, viewed from the tank park. (Pierce)

The stepchild status of the U.S. Marine Corps during WWII was not lost on First Armored troops. We were well aware that the perceived needs of our sister services were served before those of the Corps were considered. For example, the Garand

M-1 rifle was not distributed in quantity to the Marines until the Army began to declare it surplus. We were short on "Table of Organization" allotments of numerous items of equipment such as jeeps, Thompson submachine guns, and .45-caliber pistols. The Corps in general, and First Armored in particular, was deprived of these needed weapons of war. Certain enlisted personnel of the First Armored, without the knowledge or approval of the officer corps, set about to alleviate this situation. U.S. Army jeeps, neatly repainted in Marine Corps green and otherwise made indistinguishable from those we brought from San Diego, were added to the First Armored's motor pool before the Army missed them. Occasionally we "borrowed" equipment. One night certain First Armored troops (who shall remain nameless) borrowed a jeep nominally allocated to the

commanding officer of our Guadalcanal neighbor, the 4th Amtrac Battalion, and drove some distance across the island to an Army ordnance depot, but sadly returned empty-handed, without the collection of Thompson submachine guns they had sought. The Army depot had moved, but the 4th Amtrac jeep was duly returned to its motor pool before it was missed. All successfully purloined equipment was turned to the advantage of the United States during subsequent battles on Guam and Okinawa.

Military discipline was visibly tighter at First Armored than at neighboring outfits on Guadalcanal. Our Battalion Commander, Major Louis Metzger, never relaxed his persistent training schedule. Although we grouched and complained, as troops have done from time immemorial, our morale was excellent and we were proud of the First Armored. In retrospect, I am convinced that our high state of combat readiness—attained and retained at Major Metzger's insistence—paid off in holding our battle casualties to a minimum.

CAMP LIFE ON GUADALCANAL

Though combat preparation had top priority in the First Armored, allowance had to be made on Guadalcanal for the rigors of a torrid, rainy, unhealthful environment. Work in the Battalion was accordingly scheduled for the early hours of the day, leaving the hot afternoons as free time. That was when the men wrote letters, read, took showers, washed clothes, cleaned personal gear, played cards, or enjoyed what recreations were available.

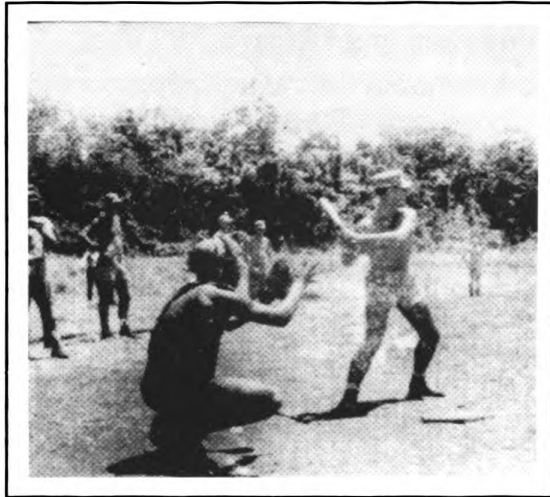
LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

If there was a rotation policy in World War II, it was not evident to the Marines in the combat units. Overseas tours of 25, 30 and even 36 months were usual. With few exceptions, vacancies occurred only through casualties. There was no leave, no "R&R" or even the sight of civilization. There existed only the shock of battle followed by return to rudimentary base camps on isolated islands like Guadalcanal, where a warm beer or an old 16mm movie was considered recreation. Heat on those islands was unimaginable. At midday one could get a severe burn from just touching the metal of an armored vehicle. The crews inside the vehicles came close to being roasted, but tough and young, they managed. Coconut crabs swarmed out at night, and mosquitos carried malaria.

Because of the heat the Battalion training schedule commenced early in the morning and secured at 1100. The men were then free to swim, play softball or volleyball or to work on equipment. It was possible to scrounge rubber life rafts from the Army Air Corps. Soon the lagoon in front of the camp was a sea of Marines, stark naked or in skivvies, floating about or attempting to sail their rafts. A popular sport was to float some 10 miles from the inland ranges to the sea down the Balasuna River, whose swift current carried the intrepid raftsmen through some of the most beautiful jungle in the world.

ROBERT W. PIERCE, Company A

The floors were dirt, and we would keep our beer ration in a hole dug under our cots to keep it cool. Our cots were hung with mosquito netting. We sank wells for wash water and bathed either from our helmets or in the lagoon at the rear of the camp.



Softball. Donald Scharf at bat, Joseph C. Baumbach catching. (Zenger)

Later we suspended 50-gallon drums from scaffolding to provide showers. The drums were filled by a tank truck. Lighting a match to an old sock stuffed in a beer bottle containing diesel fuel provided a lamp for letter writing at night. We scrubbed our dungarees and khakis with a hand scrub brush, dried them on a clothes line, and pressed them by placing them under our sleeping pad. The weight of our bodies put a good crease in our trousers.

We had weekly inspections and daily work details. One week there would be weapons inspection. The next might be clothing or living quarters or tanks or tank weaponry. Daily work details included

cleaning company areas, heads, and tank areas. We built a ball park, prize fighting ring, and recreation tent, and helped the quartermaster with his supply duties.

Battalion headquarters would occasionally call an assembly. Companies would march into the assembly area, fall out, and gather round while Major Metzger would scoop us on what the future plans were for First Armored. We held the Major in high respect though sometimes we thought he was very "gung ho" (ambitious). He instilled great pride in us—in ourselves, the Battalion, and the Corps.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

There were work parties, guard detail, mess duty, or training every day except Sundays. Because of the heat, we started our tasks early in the morning and, a lot of the time, were able to secure by early afternoon to do laundry, clean weapons or gear, swim, write letters, play volleyball or softball, etc., etc. We built latrines (heads, in the Marine Corps), hoisted barrels or other big containers up about ten feet high onto coconut log supports to make showers, and built big recreation, quartermaster, and training tents. We made a boxing ring, and erected a large movie screen out in the open, with many rows of horizontal coconut logs for seats. All this work kept us lean, mean, and in excellent physical condition. You should try taking an axe to a tall coconut tree with a 20- to 24-inch diameter base. Chain saws had not been invented then. These trees were straight and extremely tough because of their dense fiber content. They were also very heavy. We would cut them to length according to their intended usage, load them onto

an amphibious tank, tie them down, and take them to where they were to be used. Work crews there would continue the project.

The Battalion mess hall was behind, or south of, H&S Company. Each company had a staggered time in which to enter, eat, and exit the mess hall. This allowed for one mess hall to be used by the whole battalion. No one rushed you out after the meal, but we all respected the fact that others would soon be coming in. Besides, it was always nice to go crap out on your sack before work commenced again. Rank was recognized in the chow lines, sergeants and then corporals getting in line ahead of PFCs or privates if they desired. That was no problem, and I never heard anyone bitch about it.

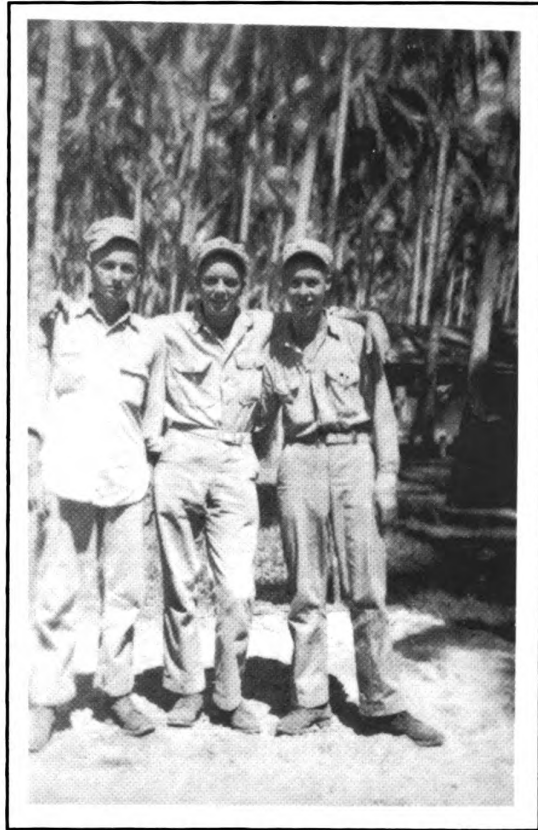
GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

It wasn't too long before we had a rather comfortable camp and fell into a routine which wasn't bad. If I remember, there were six men to a tent, with dirt floor, which we got used to. Each cot was provided with a mosquito net, which was a must. Speaking of mosquitoes in that most malaria-prone area of the world, each morning we had to take an atabrine tablet to help reduce the chances of malaria. We had reasonably good food once we got used to the Australian mutton and canned butter. Also, the Army had established a PX so that pogie bait and other essentials were available to us. One thing we didn't see much of though was beer, and in that hot, humid climate we sure could have used a cool beer now and then.

As we had no electricity for the camp area, each man had to come up with his own source of light for the night. The most popular lamp was made of a Planter's peanut can with a hole in the top cover, using a piece of rope for a wick and any fuel we could find at the fuel dump. From some stateside source which I can't remember, we received Planter's cans full of about 75 Chelsea cigarettes. I didn't smoke much in those days, but I did get my can.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

We had our own PX, skimpy as it was, and also an outdoor movie theater. Malaria began to show its effects in the Battalion. Many also had jungle and skin diseases. Jungle rot was very difficult to treat and heal. Mail from loved ones and

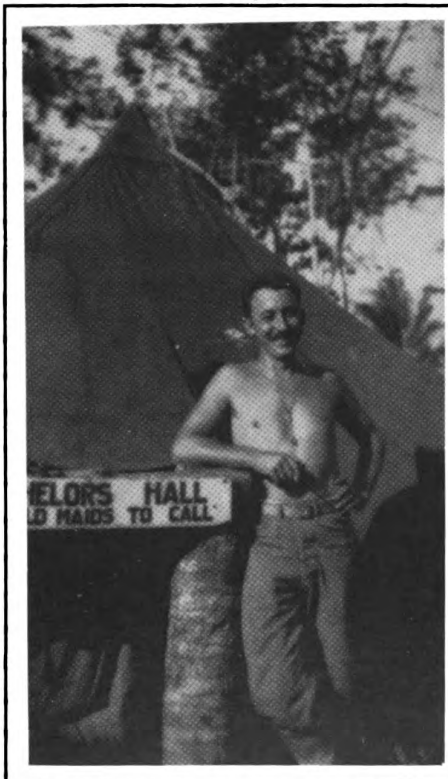


Warren L. Smith, Leonard H. Smith and F.F. "Chick" Cutright, of Company C

friends sure did wonders for a guy's morale, especially letters from Mom and Dottie—dear, sweet, darling Dottie. Especially on Easter Sunday I missed them.

RICHARD ZENGER, Company D

We were issued a few cans of beer each week. I kept mine cool in an ammunition box buried in the sand under my cot. We built a table around the pole in our tent, with benches for writing, playing cards, etc. For light at night we used a coke bottle filled



Stephen J. Kalmar, Company B supply sergeant. (Coker)

with gasoline, with an old skivvy shirt for a wick. We had a wash rack for clothes near the showers. I washed clothes almost every day, using a scrub brush and bar soap. I think we had buckets which we packed in our seabags. We had several foot-long fruit bats living in the palm tree outside our tent.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

The chow was adequate if unremarkable. We consumed endless meals of creamed chipped beef on toast and, in B Company on a selective basis, quite a lot of canned fruit cocktail liberated from LST 122. Among our number were several Marines with agricultural backgrounds. Some of them were delegated farming or truck gardening duties at Camp McCartney. They produced a few fresh vegetables, including cucumbers which attained the size of watermelons in Guadalcanal's rain forest environment. The only potable water was that hauled in from inland fresh water streams and chlorinated in lister bags. Individual Marines carried chlorine tablets to treat water in their personal canteens.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

Being at the end of the supply line and being a separate battalion with a junior major for a commanding officer, we received poor rations and little beer. It was frustrating to see carcasses of beef, pork and lamb float by, down the Slot in front of our camp, to be discarded by Navy ships in favor of more desirable meat. Our diet was heavy on Spam, Vienna sausage, canned sardines in tomato sauce, lemonade (usually hot), dehydrated eggs. It was lacking in fresh eggs and meat, although once in a while we got Australian mutton.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

I got pretty restless at times and felt a little homesick and blue. Most of the time I wished we could get out of there. You felt a little nuts just waiting. It rained every day.

JAMES C. CHANDLER, Company C

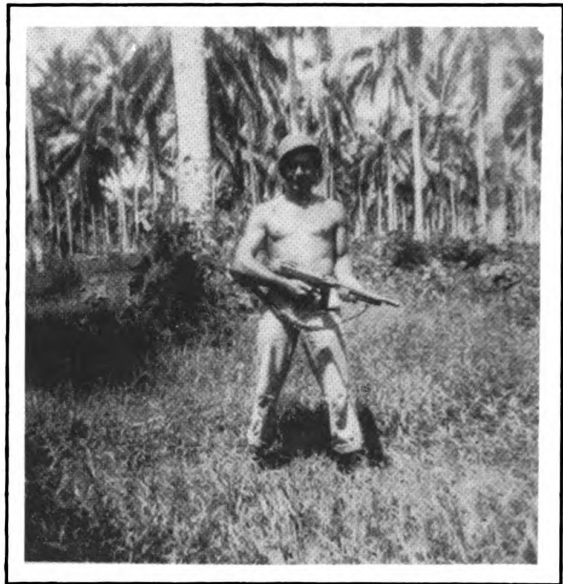
After we arrived on Guadalcanal, I remember walking on the beach one night. Boy, was I one lonely, homesick kid. I'll never forget that. Eighteen years old and 7000 miles from home and, except for a two-week visit to an uncle, I had never been away from home. The time on the Canal was endless training and working on equipment. If I remember correctly, we stopped work a little after noon because of the heat. The tanks were so hot you could fry eggs on them. We would sweat out a suntan in the morning and get a tan in the afternoon.

DONALD C. HOUSTON, Company B

While on Guadalcanal I received the news (a week late) that I had become a daddy the second time. My eldest daughter, Elaine, was born on April 13, 1944. One of the replacement men was Wilbur Partington of D Company. After the war we both lived in Derry, New Hampshire, and became close friends.

GEORGE LEGINO, Company B

Joe (Joseph A.) Biala of H&S Company was the Battalion quartermaster sergeant. Tall, slender, he always appeared to be so gruff when handing out supplies, but he always took good care of us and gave us what we needed. Joe turned out to be my good friend.



George F. Roberts, Company D, at Coconut Grove on Guadalcanal (Roberts)

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

In general we had a rather easy life considering the environment and circumstances. Don't get me wrong though; we were all pretty homesick. Once I got used to the land crabs and other strange crawling life, Guadalcanal wasn't so bad. It was a most interesting place for me, probably because I had never been very far away from home before joining the Corps. It is unfortunate we were not allowed to have cameras in our possession. Pictures would help a lot in putting this narrative together.

WILDLIFE

There was beauty to be seen in the plant and animal life on Guadalcanal, but there were perils also. Orchids, hibiscus, frangipanis, and bougainvillea were brilliantly beautiful, though most of us did not know their names. There were also colorful birds and fish. Coconuts and other tropical fruit were a treat. But some grasses were barbed, some leaves and vines were toxic. Crocodiles and snakes were at home in and near the rivers. Creepy creatures, like crabs, centipedes and scorpions, might turn up right in our tents or in shoes left out overnight. Monkeys and two-foot lizards were not usually a threat, just an interesting part of life on Guadalcanal.

DONALD SCHARF, Company D

Seeing parrots, monkeys, iguanas, crabs that ran sideways, very large centipedes, and big scorpions, all in their natural settings was certainly different. Visits by crawling crabs and lizards were commonplace as you sat in the tent writing letters or doing other things. I'm the world's choicest morsel for mosquitos, and they were around in droves—tenacious, persistent, noisy pests. I learned to sleep with my arms folded on my chest under the netting, which I tucked tightly under the mattress in my bunk. If I didn't do this, big red itchy welts covered my arms. Upon rising in the morning, before putting on your shoes, you checked them for scorpions; shoes were one of their favorite hiding places. I sure did enjoy the small finger-sized bananas and sweet ripe juicy pineapples that grew on the island.

WILLIAM D. GERMAIN, Company A

Each night we had an invasion of land crabs and also centipedes as big as your thumb and a foot long. We would lean out of the sack and kill them with an entrenching shovel or pick and then, in the morning, have to clean them all up.

ROBERT W. PIERCE, Company A

One evening crabs swarmed over the camp. They were apparently headed from bay shore to the lagoon to spawn. We killed many of them with spades and machetes. The following morning we had dead crabs all over the floor of our tents, live ones in our boots. The company streets were littered with them. The banks of the lagoon were covered with the survivors which had moved through the area. We had to load the remains on a truck to rid the area of them.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

The Solomon Islands in 1944 were, and are today, one of the most disease-ridden, unhealthy areas on the face of the earth. Malaria and other tropical diseases thrive. Only nine degrees from the equator, Guadalcanal has only two seasons: the rainy season and the dry season. It rains every day during the "dry" season. Mere contact of the human skin with some of the plant life produces painful open sores and abscesses, very

difficult and slow to heal. A species of crustacean known to us as land crabs were given to periodic migration, en masse, from inshore to the beach. They marched relentlessly, by the millions, through Camp McCartney's streets and our tents, toward the water. A few tarried in our shoes, mess kits and packs. Though harmless, the crabs were repulsive, and the Marines were careful to shake out "boondocker" shoes before donning them.

JAMES C. CHANDLER, Company B

Most days we swam some. The coral reefs were havens for many species of fish, in all sizes and colors. Also, the coral was amazing in its structure and color. One day I went with someone up into the mountains to the Balesuna River. We floated down this cold, clear mountain stream to where it flowed into the ocean. The canopy of trees and vines and flowers was beautiful. One day I was in a large grass-covered (waist-high) opening that was ringed with tall trees covered with red flowers. Some of these sights you cannot forget.

GEORGE F. ROBERTS, Company D

My memories of Guadalcanal include the land crabs, the beautiful (ugh) spiders, the time someone slipped an iguana into Gunny (John W.) Frye's sack, hitting a palm tree with a tank (hatches closed) to get a fresh supply of coconuts, and swimming in water where I could float like a cork. I remember B. B. (Beaufort B.) Walling, the company barber, whom I loved like a brother. I also remember the endless cleaning, sanding, oiling, and greasing of all metal parts against that salt air.



Joseph C. Baumbach, Company D, by Cavaga Lagoon, near the tank park. (Roberts)

EDWARD G. RIZKALLA, Company C

Once at our camp a few buddies and I jumped into a muddy river to cool off. After about fifteen minutes or so, I came out of the water to find there were dozens of leeches all over my legs. I tried to brush them off, but they wouldn't come off. I had to grab each one separately and pull them off one at a time. They had dug into my skin.

MOSQUITOS AND MALARIA

Defenses against the malaria-bearing anopheles mosquito were routine and a part of life: insect repellant, a mosquito net over every cot at night, and, from sundown on,

dressing to cover our bodies completely. Taking atabrine tablets daily could give the skin a yellowish cast, but it was strictly enforced as a malaria preventive. The Battalion shipped a few men back to the states because of malaria, as well as some other diseases, such as fungal rashes (which we called jungle rot) and filariasis (or elephantiasis).

JAMES C. CHANDLER, Company B

In walking through the jungle you could brush a bush and set off a dense cloud of mosquitos, which would fly up and cover you for a while. At night we rolled up in woolen blankets, and the mosquitos would bite through them as if there was no covering.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

To try to reduce the amount of mosquito bites received when we were out in the jungle, we always kept our pants legs in our socks or wore leggings, and had our sleeves



<1> Lorenzo B. Singletary, Leonard H. Smith, Warren R. Smith, Robert Blaemire, from tank crew C-13, Company C. (Blaemire). <2> Harsh Pat Wallace, Ralph Thomas Miers, Warren R. Smith, Leonard C. Smith, Cyril J. Schneid, Edward G. Rizkalla, of Company C. (Blaemire). <3> Donald Scharf, Joseph B. O'Brien, John T. Hes, George B. Engelmann, of Company D. (Zenger)

rolled down and collars up. If they were too numerous, we would wear mosquito nets over our helmets or caps, with the lower part tied around the neck. This was a last resort as, because of the heat, we didn't like to wear them. We also had a stinky, oily mosquito repellent that we could put on the skin and on clothing next to the skin. We took these precautions also when we were in camp from about 5:00 or 6:00 p.m. on, except for the head net and repellent. At night in camp we also each had large mosquito nets that were tied to a framework that fit over our cots. The bottom part of all four sides of the net were tucked under our mattress pads so that insects could not get to us. This also kept out the harmless geckos (small lizards) from running over your body and face and scaring the hell out of you. The nets also kept centipedes, snakes, and other neighbors from sleeping with you. There were a lot of geckos, and we liked them because they ate mosquitos and other insects and were entertaining to observe inside the tents in daytime.

ROBERT W. PIERCE, Company A

We took atabrine daily to immunize ourselves from malaria. Some fellows would get a sort of yellow hue on their cheeks and foreheads from atabrine. At 5:00 p.m. daily "Mosquito Call" was sounded as regularly as reveille, chow call and taps. It meant tucking pants legs into socks, buttoning collars and jacket sleeves, and covering exposed skin with insect repellent.

RICHARD ZENGER, Company D

Malaria was a major concern. Platoon Sergeant René "Bo" Bolduc and/or a corpsman would toss a bitter-tasting atabrine pill into each Marine's mouth at roll call in the company street at 0600 each morning. After sunset we always wore long sleeves, buttoned our jackets to the neck, and tucked our pants into our socks.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

All hands were required to take daily doses of atabrine tablets, which were supposed to prevent malaria or at least suppress the symptoms of that disease. A side effect of this medication was a marked yellow skin tone which, combined with its bitter taste, did not encourage its use. Our battalion medical corpsman dealt with this problem by standing at the head of the breakfast chow line, requiring each Marine in the line to open his mouth, and tossing an atabrine tablet into his gullet. When the corpsman was satisfied that the bitter pill had been swallowed, the Marine was allowed to proceed with his breakfast. It appears that this program was relatively effective. I don't recall many Marines in the First Armored being disabled by malaria during the war, although I personally suffered recurrences of the disease for a number of years afterward.

EDWARD G. RIZKALLA, Company C

Once on Guadalcanal a fellow Marine took a bucket, filled it to about a third full with water, and dropped one atabrine pill in it. He then put his white top shirt in it and let it set a couple of minutes. It came out all yellow. I figured that taking one of those every day, plus 27 a day for three days when I had malaria, came to about 800 pills in two years. No wonder I turned yellow, especially in the whites of my eyes.

MOVIES, RADIO, OTHER DIVERSIONS

With liberty ports thousands of miles and many months away, the most important recreations were nightly movies, the AFRS (Armed Forces Radio Service), and organized sports. Some men swam, fished, or boated in nearby waters, and some explored the jungle or even went hunting in the wilds. Mail from home helped keep spirits high even if it arrived in the form of V-mail. Miniature editions, without ads, of popular magazines such as *Time* were distributed free. Sometime bizarre incidents would happen in camp which seem funnier now than they did then.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

The Marine Corps had no bars, taverns, or slop chutes in the Pacific that I ever heard of. I don't know about the other services. There were no cities, towns, or civilian facilities. But it was not an unpleasant life part of the time, for most of us were very young and didn't know any better. Most of us, in our outfit at least, never set foot inside a USO club even. I know there was one on the 'Canal, but no other places where we were. It's a tribute to our CO and the other officers that we were kept occupied and, in our leisure time, had recreational things to do if we desired.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

Some of the guys like Joe (Joseph B.) Logue and Tim (Thomas A.) Timmons spent quite a bit of time playing cribbage. Believe it or not, sometimes they got so involved with the game that they were close to missing chow call, and did miss movies in the evening. One of the men captured an iguana and tied it to a tree in front of his tent. Horrible looking thing an iguana. The monkeys were friendly though. If someone wanted a coconut, all he had to do was throw a rock up into the coconut tree, and the monkey would respond by throwing a coconut back. I don't remember which river it was, but Jack (John T.) Evans, George S. Stevens, Goldie (Mayer S.) Goldberg, and I went swimming, and it felt great. A couple of the men built a small boat out of aircraft pontoon tanks and had fun "yachting" in the bay. We spent quite a bit of time exploring around part of the island near the Kukum Dock area and in the vicinity of the Army PX and Henderson Field.

ROBERT W. PIERCE, Company A

We generally had liberty from noon Saturday after inspection until Sunday sundown. We would many times hitchhike to Henderson Field, where the Army had a large PX. We would shop to stock up on some of the supplies not available in camp. Most of our liberty hours were spent letter writing, reading, and playing baseball or volleyball.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

The primary form of recreation on Guadalcanal was motion pictures projected on a screen formed by a sheet stretched between two coconut palms. The seating consisted of coconut logs arranged in front of the screen. Because the theater was in the open, the shows could not begin until darkness had fallen. And the images on the screen and the sound track were often obscured by B-24 bombers as they roared off, with their landing lights on, from Henderson Field, a short distance to the west of Camp McCartney. Some of the dramatic effect of the cinema was sometimes diluted by this environment, as when we viewed *Sahara*, a picture portraying the trials, tribulations and thirst of desert warfare in North Africa, while our Guadalcanal audience sat drenched in a tropical downpour.

WILLIAM D. GERMAIN, Company A

Movies were always a treat. Because it seemed to rain almost every movie, standard dress was poncho and helmet liner so you could sit out the rain during the movie.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

Our camp was something to be proud of, and we were. Intercom boxes had been nailed on trees throughout the camp streets. Each company had a TCS radio set up to pick up broadcasts, another humongous morale builder. The music coming over those speakers was the ultimate in good medicine. The Armed Forces Radio Service station on the Canal served all the Solomons. One program in particular was the "Atabrine Cocktail Hour," with the theme song, "The Flight of the Bumble Bee," done by, of course, the incomparable Harry James.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

I garnered some climbing irons and telephone wire from our communications section and a number of loudspeakers from "spares." I installed the speakers in convenient trees along the company street and connected them to a radio receiver at the CP shack, enabling B Company to receive, via public address, broadcasts of the Armed Forces Radio Service (AFRS) station on Guadalcanal. At the end of the military day, at 1700, the station played Harry James's version of "The Flight of the Bumblebee," which alerted all hands to apply mosquito repellant, button collars, and tuck trouser

bottoms into socks, against the onslaught of the dread malaria-carrying anopheles mosquito. "Mosquito call" became a daily ritual for the First Armored. One U.S. Army sergeant, Jack Paar, was the principal announcer on this AFRS station. Sergeant Jack Paar became an American television eminence in postwar years, before Johnny Carson.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

Often it was enough just to take a shower and lie in our skivvies on our cots, listening to beautiful music. Because of spare radio speakers from the tanks, we had radios hooked up and fastened to trees along the company streets every third or fourth tent. There was an AFRS station on the island and, besides news, we heard some of the most beautiful music played. The music was both current and old favorites. Some of my favorites were "Sweet and Lovely," "Indian Love Call," and "Begin the Beguine."

ROBERT W. PIERCE, Company A

I remember a disc jockey broadcasting from the Island radio station. The program was called "Here's Me." He played a lot of Jo Stafford records such as "You Belong to Me" and "Sentimental Journey." Occasionally we would hear from Tokyo Rose.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

Dale L. Barker, Jack (John T.) Evans, Goldie (Mayer S.) Goldberg, and George Stevens set up a D Company radio tent, with a TCS receiver and speakers placed through the area so we could listen to the AFRS station located somewhere on the island. We used to hear recordings of popular stateside radio programs such as The Lucky Strike Hit Parade. I presume the recordings we heard were at least two weeks

SOME AFRS HIT SONGS

You'll Never Know. Chattanooga Choo Choo. I've Heard That Song Before. I'll Be Seeing You. Mairzy Doats. Rum and Coca Cola. Dance with a Dolly (with a Hole in Her Stocking). Don't Fence Me In. Don't Get Around Much Anymore. You Always Hurt the One You Love. I'll Never Smile Again. Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy. To Each His Own. Swinging on a Star. Comin' In on a Wing and a Prayer. Shoo Shoo Baby. Ac-cent-tchu-ate the Positive. Deep in the Heart of Texas. There are Such Things. Don't Sit under the Apple Tree (with Anyone Else but Me). I'll Walk Alone. There I've Said it Again. As Time Goes By. Green Eyes. Till the End of Time. When the Lights Go On Again (All over the World). In the Mood. I Left my Heart at the Stage Door Canteen. Daddy. Chickery Chick. Der Fuehrer's Face. My Dreams are Getting Better All the Time. Saturday Night (is the Loneliest Night of the Week). Somebody Else is Taking my Place. I Don't Want to Set the World on Fire. Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition. (There'll be Bluebirds over) the White Cliffs of Dover. I'll Get By (as Long as I Have You). It's Been a Long, Long Time. Oh! What it Seemed to Be. Pistol Packin' Mama. Jingle Jangle Jingle. Sentimental Journey.

old. Probably my favorite program was "G.I. Jill and her G.I. Jive" program. The program was MC'd by a young lady named Martha Wilkerson, who ended her program with "Good morning to some of you, good afternoon to some more of you, and to the rest of you, goodnight."

We had mail call quite often, and it was the highlight of any day. I preferred to receive regular mail rather than V-mail, a miniaturized photocopy of the original, with no personality at all. V-mail was the way to go, however, as it allowed the maximum mail to be moved with the minimum of space. It was better than getting no mail at all.

WILLIAM D. GERMAIN, Company A

I had some mail call experiences I think none of the others had. We wrote our folks and told them *not* to send candy, cookies, or any soft stuff because after three months' transit and lots of heat, nothing like that would survive. That's when my parents thought a jar would ship well. So they sent me many a jar of Limburger cheese. It was always an event when I received a package from home as we always shared packages. One could always tell when I opened mine. But it did taste good with K ration crackers, and I assure you it never went to waste.

Another special thing was a fruit cake I received from a girl I knew in Australia. She baked the fruit cake, and her father put it in a tin can and soldered it tight. That was just like being vacuum packed. She then sewed a cloth cover for it and sent it. It took six months to reach me, but when it did, it was in perfect condition and was shared by all of our crew. They all liked that gal in Australia.

From
To MRJ. C. C. ROBERTS
RT. 2, BOX 8
PARADISE
CALIFORNIA

FROM
CORP. GEORGE F. ROBERTS
CAMP 14, REAR AREA
FLEET P.O.
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.
APR 5 1944

Dear Mom
I haven't been in a writing mood for a couple of days but will try to get one written tonight. The latest and most startling news is a U-mail from Paul saying that he's I-A in the army and was expecting to be called within a few days. What the heck is wrong with the govt. back there when they have to take a guy with five kids out of the shipyard and draft him? How about all those Hollywood playboys and guys without kids. I don't get it. It's the most absurd thing I ever heard of. Just got a letter from Bob from Yosemite Park rest camp. What soft duty. It looks like they're figuring on home-attending the place here so I think there'd be time for a package. Suggestions are - fruit cake, ice box or hard cookies, almonds, peanut brittle and stuff that would keep about a month. Hope Dad had a happy birthday. Really sending a money order for \$25 to get Dad a birthday present and an anniversary present. What anniversary is this now? Whatever it is, congratulations Mom & Dad & love to all,
George

V-mail letter from George F. Roberts to his mother. (Roberts)

Whitey (Thomas L.) Coleman's folks thought that, because Vienna sausage was scarce in the U.S., it must have been scarce for us too. So they sent many a can of it our way. Mail call was sure an event we all loved, and we can all remember the things we got in the mail.

BYRON G. SNEVA, Company C

The best thing in this period before the departure, besides letters and packages from home, was a special evening, on May 15, provided by the Red Cross for men of

Dear Mom,

I have been transferred overseas and have safely reached my destination.

Please address all mail for me exactly as follows:
 (Name) Pfc. George F. Roberts, USMC,
 (Organization) D. Company, 1st Armored Amph. Bn.,
Fourth Marine Division.
 c/o Fleet Post Office
 San Francisco, Cal.
~~1647/104/11/14~~ (Cross out one)
George F. Roberts (signature)
 (This card was prepared prior to departure, held and mailed in the United States upon receipt of information of writer's arrival).

corporal or lower rate. There were four very becoming women to serve ice cream and cold cokes to us. They sure looked beautiful and were as amiable as possible. Towels were given as prizes for Bingo. It was quite a change. I was ready to say, "Give to the Red Cross your nickels and dimes."

Postcard mailed in the U.S., to reassure service men's families. (Roberts)

Other recreations were the movies, swimming, pitching horseshoes, playing catch with a baseball, and throwing a football around. About this time C Company acquired a mascot, a little wild pig, caught when it was swimming in the river. It sure was cute and would follow everybody around.

DONALD SCHARF, Company D

Because the surf around Guadalcanal was never high, refreshing swims took priority after a hard day's work in the hot sun. Most of us stripped down to the waist while working in the sun and got as brown as pecan nuts. Torrential rains often caused rivulets of water to enter our tents and so irrigation procedures were ongoing. I began repairing watches for the guys. I also underwent a hernia operation in a tent hospital. The doctors did a fine job and, in a few weeks, I was as good as new.

BYRON G. SNEVA, Company C

Payton C. "Monty" Montgomery found an old boat in the river, named it the *USS Seduction*, and patched it up well enough that we could make cruises up the river. Sometimes we saw alligators and signs of wild boar. One Sunday Monty came back with two hams off a wild pig he had shot back in the bush to the east. He traded one for a

pound of butter and some salt and pepper. We all broke out our mess gear and fried wild pork over the fire. Boy, it was good! The best fresh meat I had eaten since joining the Corps. Seven of us ate the whole ham. We made joe [coffee] to go with it, and then broke out a gallon can of cherries we had backed out of the property tent. I hit the sack as full as after a Thanksgiving turkey dinner. That was really an occasion, and we planned to do it again the next day off we got.

ROBERT W. PIERCE, Company A

Our PX ordinarily had only a small supply of staples, and we looked forward to a new stock of replenishments that would be trucked in periodically. Cigarettes and aftershave lotion were popular items and in short supply at the PX. Aftershave lotion was sometimes mixed with grapefruit juice and consumed rather than worn. I remember paying a Marine in C Company \$35.00 for a fifth of New Zealand whiskey which was described as "green." An apt description, for I was about that color the next morning! The better stuff from Australia sold for \$50.00 we were told, but that was a whole lot of money.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

About the second week I was in the 1st Armored, one of the crew in my tent obtained some "raisin jack." This was a potent, foul-tasting, smelly drink that was always secretly being made by someone someplace. Of course, it was against rules and regulations to do so, but I believe it was overlooked sometimes if it didn't get out of hand and the officers and higher ranking NCOs could avoid making an issue of it. Although called raisin-jack, it was actually made of anything that could be obtained (i.e., stolen), such as raisins, fruit cocktail, canned peaches, pears, pineapple, or whatever. The masters of it made stills and crude condensers, but the run-of-the-mill operators just put the fruit in a wooden water keg (usually "borrowed" from a life raft on a ship), added water, and allowed it to ferment. In a week or so, when it was bubbling merrily away and the fruit flies were thick around it, the liquid would be drained off and declared rare vintage. Anyway, one night the brew was brought out and we started drinking it. That was my first time. It wasn't long before we were giddy, especially me. Laughing and giggling, we were having a great time. I managed to break down about three mosquito bars on surrounding cots in my lurching and stumbling around. The next morning I had a head the size of a beach ball! I also noticed that my canteen cup had been turned black inside by that lethal stuff.

GEORGE F. ROBERTS, Company D

One stormy night a palm tree uprooted near our shower tent and fell across the corner of a tent where Hank (Henry F.) Fleissner had his cot. He was hollering and yelling, and four of us lifted the palm tree up enough so that others could drag him out. As I recall, the only injury was to his dignity. The next day we bucked up the tree, and it took four of us to lift an eight-foot section.

EDWARD G. RIZKALLA, Company C

One of the men in our tent was Cy (Cyril J.) Schneid, who had thick black hair on his chest and even on his back. While we were asleep at about 0500 in the morning, I heard the loudest scream I have ever heard in my life. I jumped up and looked over at Cy. He was lying on his back petrified by a lizard about a foot long clutched to his chest. How it got there under his mosquito net I'll never know. Looking back now, it seems funny, but try to picture yourself in that predicament.

RALPH E. HAUTH, Company A

One night, while we were at a movie, we heard the explosion of an ammunition ship that had blown up just offshore from our beach. When we got back to our tent, we knew luck had been with us. Thomas C. Deivert, our radioman, found that his sack had been hit by shrapnel.

BYRON G. SNEVA, Company C

We ended most days by making joe over a fire behind Monty's tent and gabbing about almost anything. Fires, joe pots and gab sessions behind tents till midnight were the usual thing in the Battalion, but we were organized more than most. I kept a list of the members of Joe's Joe Club, Camp McCartney, Guadalcanal:

Brewmaster	Sgt. Payton C. Montgomery
Commissary Clerk	Corp. Joseph S. Osieczonek
Fire Builders	Corp. Byron G. Sneva, Corp. Donald L. Rath, Corp. Harry B. Granlee
Woodchoppers	Corp. David P. MacPherson, PFC James W. Morrall, PFC Billy J. Christian
Spongers:	Sgt. Phillip D. "Lucky" Luchenbill, Corp. Daniel J. Olsen, Corp. William Monroe, Gunnery Sgt. William E. Atkinson, Corp. Donald P. Thorn

AROUND THE ISLAND

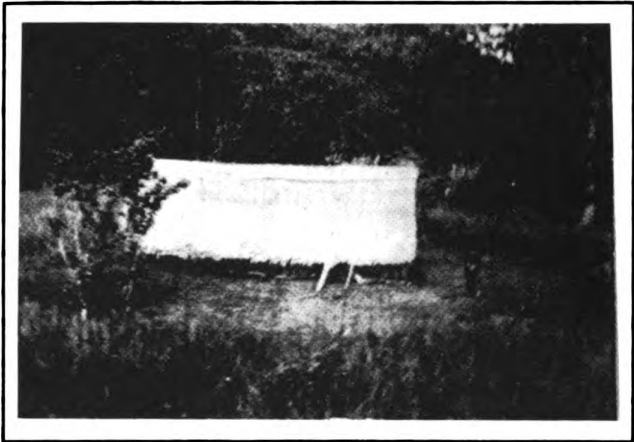
Whatever the good and bad features of Guadalcanal, there were interesting things to see for those curious enough to go looking. For some the attractions were at Henderson Field and at PX's of other units on the island, where candy and other luxuries could be bought. Some explored native villages or had encounters with native islanders. The rusting hulks of U.S. and Japanese ships along the coast made a poignant sight, grim reminders of desperate naval battles only eighteen months earlier.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

In our spare time, after working hours and on Sundays, we would hitchhike up the island. There were a lot of units on Guadalcanal: Air Corps, Seabees, doggies, swabbies, and Marines. Mainly we were looking for different PX's to purchase supplies, most importantly "pogie bait" [candy]. Our craving for pogie bait was such that we would have traveled clear around the island to get it. Most of the men went to Henderson Field to get what they could and occasionally, with luck, they found some. My buddy, Gottlieb K. "Bud" Spoerle, who was a pretty good horse trader, and I found a little PX where the doggies would sell you anything. As far as I knew, no one else knew of it. We bought what we could, took it back, and resold it—for a profit of course.

RICHARD ZENGER, Company D

For recreation I remember hiking down the beach past the neighboring amtrac battalion, and a mile or so into the jungle to a native village. I still have a comb carved from wood which I purchased there. I think it was George D. De Angelo who bought a white cockatoo from the same people. Later, back at camp he was demonstrating how the bird could not fly because its wings had been clipped. The bird took off into the jungle never to be seen again! I sometimes went to the Henderson Field area, where there was a PX, but I don't remember how I got there. Maybe a truck made a PX run from time to time.



Native house, Guadalcanal. (Zenger)

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

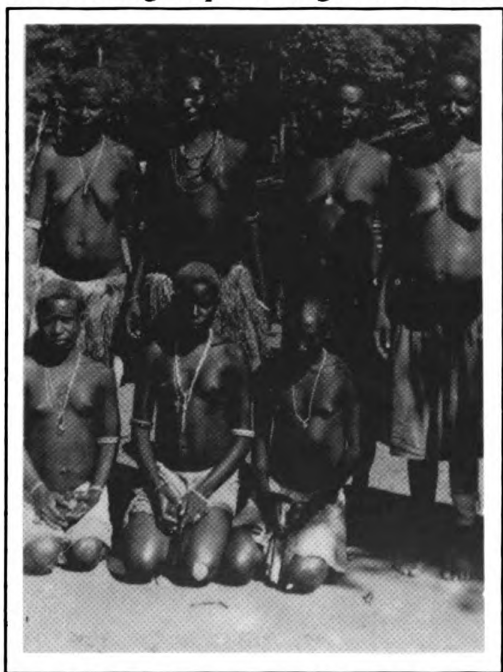
On February 27 a few pals and I took a trip to a native village about five miles from camp. The natives were mostly short, very black, and dressed scantily. The women dressed just as scantily as the men, with skirts around the waist reaching nearly to the ankles, and nothing from the waist up. Some of them had bushy red hair. Very few of them spoke English, and that rather poorly. They are converted Christians, most of them Catholic. They're nuts about sweets. One of the fellows went to the trouble of taking sugar, butter, and cocoa to the village and making fudge for them. He tried to harden it in a cool stream, but neither they nor we could wait, and enjoyed it even if it wasn't hard. From what we saw, it appeared the Marine Corps furnished them with much equipment. One played a guitar and sang "You Are My Sunshine." A few of them played the card game, casino. Their favorite expression was "Hi, Joe."

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

I once ran into an island native carrying a large straw bag draped over his shoulder. He stopped, reached into the bag, pulled out a pack of cigarettes, then pulled out a Ronson lighter, and lighted up. Now this man was dressed in his native clothing, and it struck me as quite comical to see the old merge with the new. I guessed that civilization had finally caught up with the British Solomon Islands.

DONALD L. FERCHAU, Company A

Liberty consisted mostly of going to various camps, visiting PXs, or just walking up and down the beach looking at beached Jap equipment. One sight I remember was of natives group-bathing in the Tenaru River. One of the beached Jap freighters was a perfect spot to fish. Larry R. Merritt, our tank commander, secured some cord (not string), a large hook, and some salted side meat. He and I went off to fish from the fantail of that freighter. Getting out there was no easy task, and then I discovered we were there to catch sharks! I don't know what we would have done with them if we had caught any but, fortunately, we were spared that decision. I still have visions of Larry being towed past Savo Island by a big shark.



*Guadalcanal islanders. Group pose.
(Cutright)*

After one of our practice landings, we were sitting on the beach enjoying one of our gourmet meals, when a group of natives came along with their songs and wares. I have not heard "You are My Sunshine" sung like that since. They had learned their songs from English missionaries. I purchased a stalk of bananas, all the size of my little finger, and a war club that the native had started before our talk and was finishing as we talked. In finishing

the club, the native would eat some kind of root and take a small amount of white powder from his pouch. This mixture turned his mouth and teeth orange. The same combination he used in combination with some other roots to color my war club. For payment, everything was "one dolla each." The bananas were delicious, and the war club still hangs in my "Hall of Fame" in my basement.

EDWARD G. RIZKALLA, Company C

One afternoon several of us went down the beach to a small Japanese supply ship lying on its side at the mouth of a river. We swam out to it, and swam and dived for a couple of hours. I went down some metalwork about 15 feet and watched the amazing

variety of fish for as long as I could hold my breath. When the others got ready to go back, I stayed out on the ship. About the time they reached shore I began remembering stories about barracuda. I got scared, dived into the water, and may have set a record for swimming the 200 or 300 yards to shore.

ROBERT W. PIERCE, Company A

One afternoon we were on maneuvers in a desolate area of Guadalcanal, preparing for the Marianas operation. After making a run to shore, we were relaxed on the beach awaiting further orders. A native islander had been watching us trying to cut open coconuts. He came nearer to observe. We managed to communicate with him, and eventually he scaled a tree, brought down some coconuts, and expertly sliced the rind and husk off one for us. He broke the brown woody shell of the coconut and showed us how to remove the milk from the center of the fruit. We gave him cigarettes and a D-ration candy bar to thank him for the demonstration.

PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT COMBAT

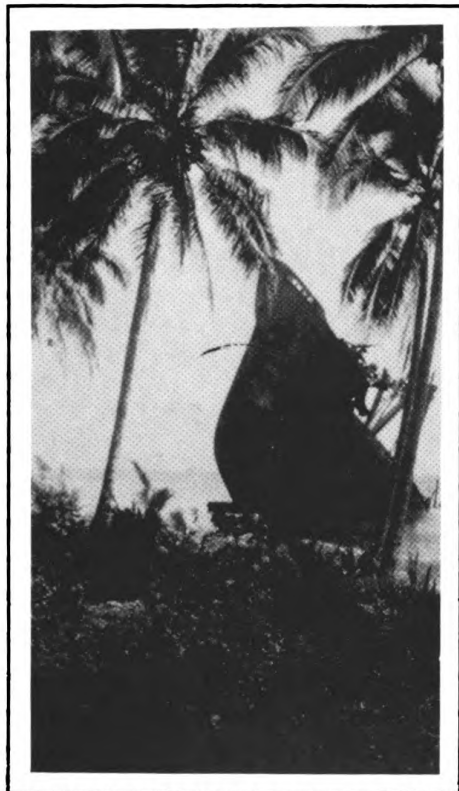
In April 1944 the pace of training quickened as the Battalion began all-out preparation for its next invasion. Under plans made by that time, First Armored companies were to operate with the 3d Marine Division and the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, both stationed on Guadalcanal. For about three days in the middle of May, A and B Companies did maneuvers with the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade on beaches between Tassafaronga and Cape Esperance. There was scuttlebutt that Guam would be our next target, but nothing was announced officially.



Robert W. Pierce and Earl M. Hill at a Guadalcanal native church near Henderson Field. (Pierce)

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

About the middle of April the Battalion, less two companies, was attached to the 3d Marine Division. The other two companies and a small command group under the Executive Officer were attached to the First Provisional Marine Brigade. Both com-



Wrecked Japanese freighter on a beach near Henderson Field. A familiar sight. (Pierce)

mands were easy to work with, and their operations officers took the trouble to learn how our battalion could best be employed. Planning and liaison with the 3d Marine Division was easy, as their headquarters was located in a large coconut grove only a short distance from our camp. The Brigade, however, was located in Tassafaronga, over two hours away by jeep. The roads were poor and at times covered with coconut crabs in the thousands.

In its simplest form, First Armored companies were to lead the assault elements to their beaches, two companies for the Division, two companies for the Brigade. The flank platoons were to be echeloned back to cover the points of land from which the enemy could fire flanking fire into the landing elements.

Training intensified with exercises in gunnery for both land and water operations. We used some offshore islands as targets for platoon and company firing exercises, and open stretches of kunai grass for land exercises.

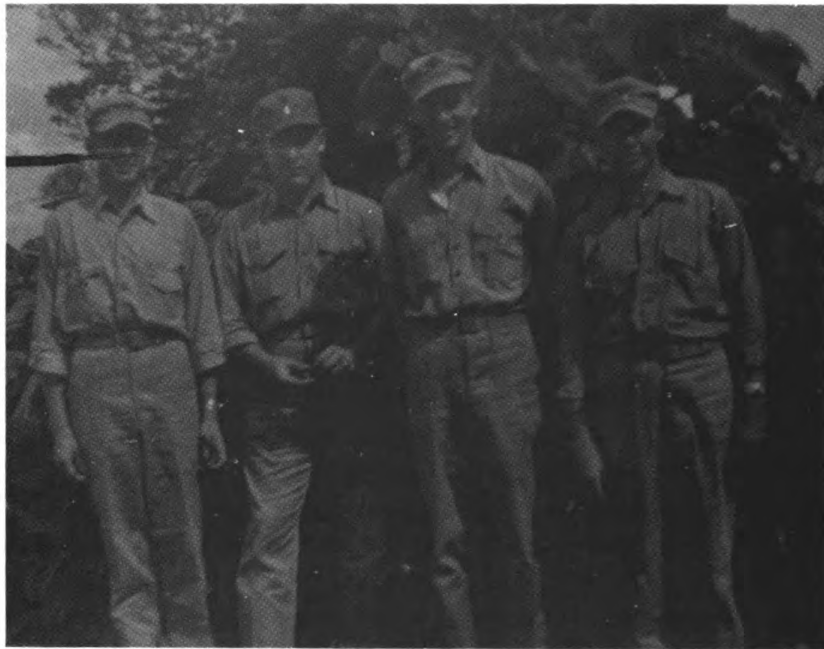
BYRON G. SNEVA, Company C

We had been having school earlier on first aid, radio, close-order drill, and bayonet, but in mid-April training for our next operation became our main routine. We did driving practice, went on firing problems out at Hutcheson Shoals, practiced night driving, ran a jungle bayonet course, and crawled through a gas chamber. We fired our weapons on a nearby range—Thompson submachine gun, .45 pistol, M-1 rifle, and carbine. We didn't know where our next attack would be, but we had school on the kind of beach it was going to be and what our job would be. We learned that C and D Companies were to work together. We didn't know what A and B Companies would be doing.

We got a new platoon leader for the 1st Platoon, Lieutenant Edward F. Alex. Lieutenant Thomas T. Oyler became the Company Executive officer. On April 15 I made corporal. Our tank was renumbered to C-6, while Ralph L. Palmer's tank became C-5. I was then the 37mm gunner for C-6, "The Greene Hornet." Herman J. Thorn, a Christian Scientist, wouldn't take his atabrine, got malaria, and had to go to the hospital.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

Early in May we were told, with no details at all, that there would be an upcoming operation and that we would begin intensified training and preparation. One day A Company had six to eight empty 55-gallon gas drums anchored out in the small bay in front of the camp. The three platoons, one at a time, were to drive their tanks from the beach into the water and then have machine gun practice while under full speed, which was probably about six miles per hour. One tank at a time would have a go at it. When A-10 was signaled to proceed and to commence firing (always seaward), we took off. I liked firing and, as port machine gunner for A-10, was really pouring them on the target. I caught a glimpse of the



Company D officers: Lt. Robert E. McDowell, Lt. Lester L. Perry, Lt. Theodore A. Burge, Lt. James W. Dupree. Guadalcanal, 1944. (Paul)

Platoon command tank, where the Company A executive officer, Lieutenant Joe (Thomas J.) Garfield was standing outside the turret on the deck. He was smiling, so I thought, and made a waving motion with his hand and arm. I naively must have thought he was approving of my accurate marksmanship or, at least that of the whole tank with its three guns. I waved happily back and poured a few more bursts into the now sinking barrel. The next thing I knew his tank was alongside ours, and he leaped onto it. Standing on the deck he chewed me out thoroughly. Of course, I was trying to stand at attention in my machine gunner's well. The tank had stopped, but the waves made this a bit difficult. My face was about level to his crotch and, no, he wasn't, and hadn't been, smiling at me. He had given me the arm and hand signal to "cease fire" instead of waving "good job, Addison." I likely knew this signal better than he, because of my infantry training at Camp Elliott, but hadn't tumbled to what he was actually trying to convey to me. His "smiling" was probably a grimace because of sun in his eyes. Needless to say, I was ashamed and crestfallen for a day or two. I had been in the outfit only six or seven weeks, so was a "new kid on the block."



First Armored Amphibian Battalion

Group photo of officers taken in March 1944 on Guadalcanal. Ranks and duties are as of that date. Personnel replacements and advancements in rank resulted in changes soon afterward.

Front row (L to R): 1st Lt Theodore A. **Burge**, Co. D Exec Off; 1st Lt Robert V. **Denney**, Bn Intelligence Off; 1st Lt Chesley O. **Freemonth**, Bn Maint Off; 2d Lt Harold D. **Holder**, Co. C Plat Ldr; WO John W. **Townsend**, Bn Asst Logistics Off; WO Kenneth L. **Smith**, Co. A MT Off; WO Glenn E. **Seifert**, Bn MT Off; WO James L. **Osborne**, Bn Asst Comm Off; WO Walter L. **Gibson**, Co. B MT Off; WO Edward A. **Yates**, Co. D MT Off.

Second row: Lt (JG) John J. **Keenoy**, Bn Med Off; 1st Lt William L. **Eubank**, Co. C Cmdg Off; 1st Lt Robert E. McDowell, Co. D Cmdg Off; Capt Richard C. **Warga**, Bn Exec Off; Maj. Louis **Metzger**, Bn Cmdr; Capt Owen P. **Lillie**, Co. A Cmdg Off; 1st Lt Edgar S. **Carlson**, Co. B Cmdg Off; Lt Cmdr Leslie J. **Luallen**, Bn Med Off; 1st Lt Harold O. **Grothem**, Co. C Plat Ldr; 1st Lt Calvin E. **McClain**, Co. B Plat Ldr.

Back row: 1st Lt Luke E. **Burch**, H&S Co. Cmdr; 2d Lt Robert C. **Hoffman**, Bn Logistics Off; 2d Lt Lester L. **Perry**, Co. D Plat Ldr; 1st Lt Thomas T. **Oyler**, Co. C Exec Off; 1st Lt James W. **Dupree**, Co. D Plat Ldr; 1st Lt William F. **Wilson**, Co. B Exec Off; 2d Lt Milton B. **Curtis**, Co. D Plat Ldr; 1st Lt Thomas M. **Crosby**, Bn Oper/Training Off; 1st Lt Ellis N. **Livingston**, Co. A Plat Ldr; 2d Lt Wiley W. **Loughmiller**, Co. A Plat Ldr; 1st Lt Thomas J. **Garfield**, Co. A Exec Off; 1st Lt Irwin R. **Buckner**, Co. B Plat Ldr; 2d Lt Robert A. **Fish**, Co. A Plat Ldr; 2d Lt Edward M. **Dooley**, Co. B Plat Ldr.

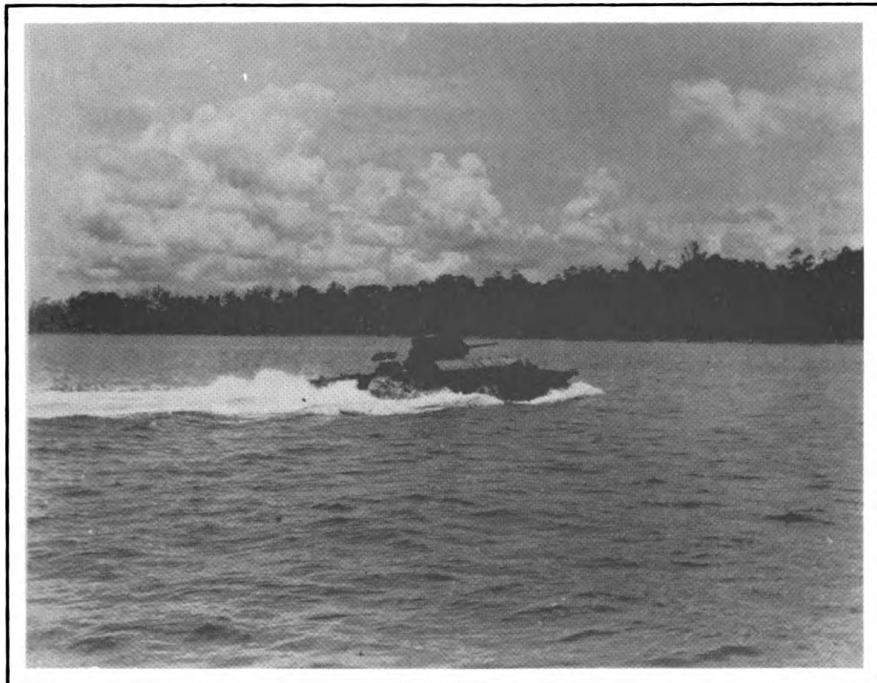
Absent: Capt James A.C. **Patrick**, Bn Comm Off; WO Louis E. **De Rousse**, Co. C MT Off.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

We started training for the next operation. We had classes, maneuvers, and inspections. The pace of maintenance work picked up too as we made repairs after maneuvers and worked to keep the tanks in good combat condition. On April 25 I taught a class on tank trouble shooting and preventive maintenance.

WILLIAM D. GERMAIN, Company A

Our tanks on Guadalcanal were getting rust on them, and we begged paint off some ships to paint our tanks. They ended up with a blue turret with red numbers. We



Company D LVTA-1
heading for a
Guadalcanal beach.
(Paul)

thought that didn't matter because we would be getting new tanks before the next operation. But we didn't. With those awful colors, we would have made wonderful targets. So they got some olive drab paint from the Army, put some black into it, and sprayed our tanks a decent color before we left. In our last landing for practice, we lost our transmission. The tank had to be taken back to camp, where Maintenance had to work 24 hours a day to get it ready to go.

NEXT-TO-FINAL MANEUVERS

Beginning on May 12, but not involving the First Armored till the 14th, what was called final pre-rehearsal training was held for land and sea forces. Companies A and B loaded onto LSTs and engaged in landings with the 1st Marine Provisional Brigade on Guadalcanal beaches near Cape Esperance, not far from Tassafaronga.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

On May 14 in the morning, we left camp in tanks, taking all equipment with us. We boarded an LST, moved along the coast for about 65 miles, and set up a bivouac. For several days we did maneuvers at sea and on the beach. We ate K and C rations, sometimes with hot chow once a day. Rugged living, but I didn't mind it. Then, back at camp, we combat loaded the tanks with ammunition and rations and waited to board ship for combat. There was scuttlebutt going around that we were headed for Guam.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

In the morning of May 14 we boarded an LST with the tanks and all equipment, sailed up the island approximately 70 miles, went ashore and set up a bivouac area. Having just received a letter from Dottie that night, I sat on top of our tank and wrote her, telling her what a swell time I was having on my big 20th birthday. I thought, Gee, I was leaving my teen-age years as a U.S. Marine, preparing for combat against a ruthless enemy, on a remote island in the Pacific Ocean. I wondered if I could make 21 or 22 or whatever, and marry Dottie and live the American dream. For the next three days we practiced ship-to-shore maneuvers. On May 20, back in camp, we combat loaded the tanks with ammunitions, rations, and the like. We were standing by for something and thought it was probably the island of Guam in the Marianas. Living conditions on maneuvers the past week had been rather rugged, living on pure C and K rations.



*LVT-1 emerging from
the water onto a
Guadalcanal beach.
(Paul)*

DONALD L. FERCHAU, Company A

On the Tassafaronga maneuvers we witnessed the emergence of what was probably the best driver in the Battalion—Herbert E. Priest of A Company. He practiced ceaselessly until his timing at shifting down at the moment the track touched on solid ground or reef was perfect. As the traction and speed increased, he shifted up and disappeared in the cover of the trees. Nary a pause or stop. This was observed by the A Company officers, but whether by Lieutenant Thomas A. Garfield, Captain Owen P. Lillie, or Lieutenant Robert A. Fish I don't know. Eventually all the drivers learned this technique. I can remember our driver, "Pinky" (Ralph E.) Pope, rocking merrily along up and down the beach in high gear, going at an invigorating five—maybe even six—miles per hour.

On one of the landings in these maneuvers, all went well until a short way inland a swamp appeared. There was something we wanted on the other side, so in we went. The tracks did okay through thin stuff despite trees, stumps, and other dumb things in the way. We dodged, pushed, and grunted our way in till we hit *muck*. The other side was in view, but we could get no traction. Our CP, "Whitey" (Thomas I.) Coleman did his thing on the radio, but soon the whole company was bogged down. The H&S wrecker finally arrived and showed us how to hook a cable to the nearest large tree across the way and back to the tank, then winch our way out. We worked in the muck for God knows how long. The routine was to hook up just so, go a few feet, hook up again, look for snakes and other varmints, go a few feet, etc. Finally we were out and headed for the ocean to clean up the tanks, weapons, and clothes.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

In the last half of May we went on maneuvers with the 22d and 4th Marine regiments at Tassafaronga, near the west end of Guadalcanal. We bivouacked there in the jungle. Beginning on the 14th, we made at least three ship-to-shore landings.

CROSSING OVER TO TULAGI

By May 17, 1944, First Armored men were combat loading the amtanks with ammunition, rations, and personal gear, ready for maneuvers and, then, departure from Guadalcanal. It took most of four days, Saturday through Monday, May 19-22, to load amtanks and men aboard LSTs and transport them across the channel to Tulagi, where ships, infantry regiments, and amphibians geared up for landing maneuvers. A rear echelon cadre was left behind on Tetere Beach to maintain Camp McCartney.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

With planning behind us, the Battalion carried out dress rehearsals with both the 3d Marine Division and the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade. We loaded onto LSTs, with administrative and support personnel on APAs. Each of the LST tank decks was loaded with ammunition, then dunnage was placed on top, and finally the LVTAs went aboard.

At that time this dangerous undercargo did not impress me. With hindsight, if the ship had been hit by enemy action, we were riding on a potential explosion.

The rehearsals were carried out at the northern portion of Guadalcanal, in the Cape Esperance area, and went well. By this time we were an experienced and well trained unit. Our LSTs then sailed to Purvis Bay on Florida Island, to an installation named Carter City. The occupant unit was Landing Craft Repair Unit Number One of the U.S. Navy. It was an impressive installation, with semi-permanent buildings, sidewalks, and all the amenities of the good life. The war, however, was passing this unit by, and morale was low. For a change, the Navy treated us well, and was most supportive. (After the Guam operation I took a lot of Japanese equipment, memorabilia, and the bell from the Piti Navy Yard and presented it to them in exchange for the assistance they had given us.)

BYRON G. SNEVA, *Company C*

We spent the last few days on Guadalcanal loading ammo, making sure the tanks and weapons worked well, and getting our personal gear ready to board ship. The harbor was packed with ships, including three LSDs. Trucks were combat loaded, and the camp was slowly being torn down. Company C was to be scattered on six LSTs and, since there were no docks, it took ten times as long to load. That meant some tanks and men went aboard earlier than others. We would get ready to go, then not go, pack up, unpack, turn in our cots, then draw them out again.

On Saturday, May 20, we drove tanks C-1, C-2, C-3, and C-6 aboard an LST. Up at 0430, we threw our gear into the tanks, had some chow, and shoved off from camp at 0600. But it was 1000 before we got aboard. The LST shoved off for Tulagi, a beautiful harbor, with big red cliffs to the sea and partially wooded hills—a lot prettier than across the channel. At first there were only eight of us from the First Platoon—William P. Goforth, Edward H. Whatley, William H. Carter, Harry B. Granlee, Harold L. Neely, William Monroe, James W. Tharp and I. There were about fifty 4th Amtrac men aboard and also some Seabees with their dozers, trucks, and trailers loaded topside. The tank deck had been filled with supplies and planked over; stacks of 5-inch shells lined each bulkhead, with just enough room for the amtracs and amtanks to squeeze in. That LST was really a packed sardine can.

Sunday was a quiet day. That evening all eight of us sat around, just like a typical Sunday evening at home. Monroe and Neely, with some help from the rest, composed a six-verse blues monologue entitled, "I Ran from Bataan," by Dugout MacArthur.

HARRY PAUL, *Company D*

Most of Company D was already aboard ship by May 20, but it was the next day, Sunday, at 1800 before some of us left camp and boarded LST 247. It was 0200 Monday before we finally got settled. For Monday breakfast we had fresh eggs for the first time since we had left the U.S.

WILLIAM MOIR, Company D

I spent the afternoon of May 17 loading ammo onto the tank. Each man of the company was given eight cans of beer. On May 18 we received orders to be ready to leave on 30 minutes' notice, and we stayed on that short notice for some time. At about 0200 on May 21 we packed up, drove about three miles down the beach, and boarded LST 343. We were assigned bunks, went to bed, and woke just in time for dinner. On May 22 we stayed aboard the LST cleaning our weapons, and Marine infantry came aboard.

MAYER S. GOLDBERG, Company D

On May 21, like other maintenance and support personnel, I became a member of the D-8 tank crew with David A. Del Vecchio, Robert C. Shepard, James A. Shiley, and Raymond S. Zakarzany.

FINAL MANEUVERS

Full-scale dress rehearsal landings began with naval exercises on Monday, May 22. The landings made by First Armored companies were made in the period from Tuesday the 23d through Thursday the 25th, on the Guadalcanal beaches near Cape Esperance. Companies C and D worked with the 3d Marine Division on May 23, A and B with the 1st Marine Brigade on May 25. Live ammunition was used by planes, ships, and artillery in bombing and shelling targets ashore. A large fleet, constituting Task Force 53, participated in these exercises. Because of the risk of malaria in leaving troops ashore overnight, most of them were taken back aboard ship at the end of each day. In a few cases, however, some First Armored crews got stranded ashore overnight. The greatest flaw in these maneuvers was the lack of a reef such as we would encounter in the upcoming invasion. On May 24 our home beach, Tetere, was a site used to practice the transfer of men from LCVs to LVTs, but the First Armored did not participate in those exercises.

BYRON C. SNEVA, Company C

We spent Monday the 22d getting ready for maneuvers on Tuesday. It was to be a dress-rehearsal landing, with naval bombardment and all. The rest of the crews for our tanks came aboard with all their gear; also 170 infantry and other troops who were a sharp looking bunch of fighters. They had bars, mortars, LMGs, and demos. Lieutenant Edward F. Alex gave us the word about the maneuvers set for the next day. At about 1400 the ships got into formation: 15 LSTs plus minesweepers, LCIs, destroyers, and three Battlewagons. They zigged and zagged all afternoon and evening, practicing for the landing. In the evening it was raining like hell out, and the infantry were topside, just as wet as the sea. I thought then they had a miserable life, got treated like dogs, and were the guys that were winning that war.

We arose at 0500 on Tuesday, May 23 and left the ship at 0720 for the landings

at Cape Esperance, past Savo Island. We weaved around on the line of departure until 0830. We and the LCIs both had a hard time trying to hold our positions. Major Metzger came up on the wrong frequency, and Ole (Robert W.) Olsen's transmitter petered out. The destroyers were pounding the beach with their 5-inchers, and the dive-bombers were really putting on a show. With the 40mms on the LCIs hammering away, we started to move in. At about 1000 yards our tanks opened up, but not C-6. Mine wouldn't fire. Everything else went fine. We hit the beach and went inland about 100 yards into a palm grove. Then the infantry came in on amtracs and, as soon as they passed us, we moved up the beach out of the way of the third and fourth waves coming in.

On our way along the beach we passed the Yamasuki Maru, a big Jap steamer, torpedoed and aground. Also there was a complicated mess that had been a two-man submarine up on the beach. Further along we saw at least half a dozen Jap landing boats, beached and shot full of holes. On later examination we found them to have 6-cylinder diesel engines, with more copper and brass on them than any machine I had ever seen.

At about 1100 we made cocoa in an old 5-gallon gas or oil drum. A 105mm howitzer unit moved up in our direction, set up in a hurry, and let go a few salvos. Half-tracks, AT 37mms, 60mm and 81mm mortars, and machine gun squads were tearing all around. About a dozen coconut trees blew over, weakened by cuts from shrapnel from the bombs and shelling. Two Marines were seriously injured when a tree fell on their mortar position. At about 1600 the problem was secured, and by 1800 we were back aboard the ship. As we left the area, we saw the Major's tank floating around with the engine conked out.

WILLIAM MOIR, Company D

On May 23 we maneuvered off beaches at Tassafaronga on Guadalcanal, then returned to the LST. Some of the tanks, however, bivouacked on the beach. On May 25 the LSTs actually beached and took all the tanks aboard.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

We drove off the LST on Tuesday the 23d and did beach maneuvers all day. We started to return to the ship, but discovered it had left, and so stayed on the beach that night. The next morning we reboarded LST 247 at 1000 and went to Florida Island for repairs.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

On May 25 we disembarked from LST 78 and held our final maneuvers, consisting of naval shelling of the beaches, air bombardment, and our tanks firing away as we approached the beaches. This was in the Cape Esperance area, three to five miles west of Tassafaronga.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

On May 22 we boarded LST 122 for our last and final maneuvers before actual combat. On the 25th we worked inland with infantry as we were to do in the operation ahead. A and B Companies were to work with the 10th Amphibian Tractor Battalion and the 4th Marines. In the afternoon we went back aboard LST 122 and moved across to Tulagi.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

On May 22 we boarded LST 447 and took a little ride. On the morning of the 25th we made a simulated landing with the infantry, tanks, planes, half-tracks and all, firing all guns. This was to be our last maneuver before the real thing. That afternoon found us back aboard ship. The infantry were not aboard, and we received good chow for a change.

JAMES C. CHANDLER, Company B

On maneuvers we were about half way between Guadalcanal and Tulagi. The LSTs had let us off, and we were just bobbing about when I looked down into the water. Some 50 feet or so down was the top of a mountain. There were huge coral boulders on the side, and they just went on and on until the water turned black and you could no longer see them.

TULAGI AND DEPARTURE

After the maneuvers, all units stood by at Tulagi for up to a week while repairs were made, water, ammunition, supplies, and troops were loaded, and other preparations were made for departure. Since much of this was light work, First Armored men had some opportunity, in free times, to enjoy movies and some other facilities on Tulagi. Some of the repairs were for major damage or breakdowns requiring feverish efforts on the part of maintenance men. The Navy had built a major repair base on Tulagi and named it Carter City. Tulagi also had one of the finest harbors in the South Pacific. Anchorages between Tulagi and Florida Island were located close together in the Tulagi harbor, Hutcheson's Creek, and Purvis Bay.

On Wednesday, May 31, fully loaded for combat, the LSTs crossed over to Guadalcanal, stood offshore a short while, and then, in mid-afternoon departed north through the Slot. On the same day non-assault troops of the Battalion embarked aboard two transports.

WILLIAM MOIR, Company D

On May 25 the LSTs dropped anchor at Hutcheson's Creek at Tulagi, and some of us spent the day swimming off the bow of our LST. On the 26th we went ashore for a few days to service and repair the tanks. On Sunday, May 28, some of us took a boat to Lyons Point on Florida Island for mass. On the 29th we tied down our tanks aboard

the LST and loafed the rest of the afternoon. On May 30 we lifted anchor and moved into Tulagi Harbor. On May 31 we crossed back to Guadalcanal to take on some more troops.

BYRON G. SNEVA, Company C

We spent the night of May 23 anchored just outside the nets to Purvis Bay, but the next day, May 24, we went into Tulagi Harbor, way up to the end. On the way we saw three battlewagons, five cruisers, cans, oilers, transports, floating dry docks, and other ships of all kinds. The LST had moved there because it had to have a new screw. We had to drive our tanks all the way back to Carter City, where we left them to be serviced. That day I saw Major Metzger, and he was so crippled up with some ailment, he couldn't even salute. He could just barely walk. The next three days we worked on the tanks at Carter City in the daytime and slept back aboard ship at night. I had to replace a bad solenoid that had kept my 37mm on D-6 from firing. Lieutenant Chesley O. Freemonth and some of the boys went over to our camp on the 'Canal to get spare parts from some of the old tanks and to pick up mail.

Some guys ate with the Seabees at Carter City, and—*Wow!*—what chow! They had all the trimmings, lived in very comfortable quarters, had ice cold water, and a big PX with everything. We had good chow ourselves all that week. On the 27th, the LST had its new screw and moved to the water point to take on water. The next day it took a short cruise in the bay to test its screw, then anchored just outside the nets off Carter City. We brought our tanks back aboard ship. The last three days there we had nothing to do. I just sacked out, read books, practiced my sketching, sat around with the guys talking, and enjoyed the food. On Wednesday, May 31, we left Guadalcanal for good.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

At Tulagi, in the evening of May 24, we went ashore for a movie. On Thursday, May 29, we beached the tanks on Florida Island, and I returned by boat to Camp McCartney on Guadalcanal to get a new engine for D-7. We got all the needed gear aboard a sea-going tugboat by 2030, but stayed the night in camp. I left Guadalcanal at 0530 on Friday, arrived on Florida Island at 1000, and started to work on D-7's engine. A track on D-6 was also being repaired. The work on D-7 took two days to complete. We had mail call on Saturday. That day a First Armored man was hurt and returned to his LST when an LCM hit another boat. On Monday, the 29th, I put dead batteries from D-8 on line to be charged. We lashed down all tanks on the LST tank deck, then rode at anchor for two days. I got a booster shot on Tuesday. On Thursday, May 31, we had our last mail call, at least for a while, and also got a beer issue. That day our ships moved across from Florida Island to Guadalcanal, stood offshore till 1400, then departed for our next invasion.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

The company stayed aboard ship at Tulagi except for working parties and, one evening, to see a movie. It was while there that an Army captain, a friend of my sister's, got permission from my CO for me to make an overnight visit to his base on the nearby tiny, beautiful island of Olevuga.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

We lay at anchor off Tulagi for a week, taking on water and supplies for a long trip ahead. The chow was good, but we lacked water to wash with. We couldn't write letters till after we were under way. Toward the end of the week we took infantry troops aboard.

WILLIAM D. GERMAIN, Company A

On the maneuvers our LST had a bent shaft and went into dry dock in Tulagi Harbor. While there we were assigned to work parties to bring food supplies to the ship so we would be ready to leave when the ship was repaired. This wasn't bad, as the Navy officer in charge of work parties said we could have all we stole off the Seabees who were in charge of food. He was an experienced officer, and his ship got lots of food that way. And we got some goodies for ourselves.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

The night before we were due to depart for Guam I woke up with severe back spasms. I crawled, or rolled, out of my bunk and somehow got to a dispensary. After examining me the duty corpsman told me he could fix my back; I could not, however, tell anyone how he had done it. In the civilian world he was a chiropractor, but was evidently not allowed to practice in the Navy. He fixed my back, and I got back aboard ship and sailed.

CHAPTER

EIGHT

From Guadalcanal to Guam

Soon after putting to sea on May 31, 1944, the rumors and speculation about Guam were confirmed. Battalion officers announced to the troops that the next landings in the Pacific war were to be in the Mariana Islands—on Saipan, Guam, and Tinian. The invasion of Saipan was set for June 15, with the Guam invasion force standing by as floating reserves. Three days later, on June 18, the assault on Guam, led by the First Armored, would begin. The voyage from Guadalcanal to Guam, including a stopover at Kwajalein, was to take just 18 days.

But there were surprises. The Japanese upset that schedule. In response to the Saipan landing, the Imperial Navy challenged the U.S. fleet, with disaster for themselves, but with a major disruption of the Guam invasion schedule. Instead of 18 days, the Battalion and other assault forces were at sea for over 50 days (closer to 60 counting the time afloat during the Guadalcanal maneuvers). The final itinerary: Guadalcanal to Kwajalein, for staging; to Marianas waters, as reserves for Saipan; to Eniwetok, for restaging; and finally to Guam for the invasion. The eventual landing date was July 21.

GUADALCANAL TO KWAJALEIN

The convoys took six days out of Guadalcanal to reach Kwajalein on June 6. In this time the troops were told officially the objectives and given instruction on Guam and

the landing sites. As usual, the LSTs were heavily loaded and crowded. In addition to the First Armored there were Marine infantry and artillery troops aboard as well as amphibian tractors and crews. Because it was crowded and hot below decks, many men slept topside and spent most of their time there. Shipboard life settled down, with only light duties except for the ever-necessary maintenance of tanks, weapons, and personal gear.

BYRON G. SNEVA, Company C

The day we left Guadalcanal waters, May 31, our LST took on 70 infantry troops, including 15 black Marines. Our convoy had 16 LSTs, 8 SCs, 4 DEs, and 10 LCIs, really a string of ships, all in a column of twos. On June 1 we got a little geography pamphlet on the Marianas and learned our beachhead would be made on Guam. The next day we had more instruction and were told that A and B Companies would be working with the 4th Marines on a different beach. I spent most days on this trip reading, splicing loops onto lines, and shooting the breeze till late at night.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

The LST was overcrowded as usual, but the chow was still plenty good. On June 4 we were told we were to invade Guam, with the islands of Tinian and Saipan to be taken during the campaign. With approximately 22,000 natives and 10,000 Japs on Guam, it was expected the island could be secured in thirty days.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

It did not take long for many of us to decide we did not want to sleep below decks on LST 78. In the tropics the combination of steel ship and decks, hot sun, and crowded quarters convinced me about the second day that I would sleep topside. This I made a habit of doing on most of the LSTs and LSMs for the rest of the war. Most of us had brought along our wooden and canvas cots. We were lucky in this respect for, in a tank outfit, we could stow the cots inside our tank's hollow pontoons by removing a steel plate inside the tank and shoving them inside. This kept them out of the way when we were going into combat because the interior of a tank loaded for combat had no spare room for anything. Of course, when on land in combat areas, we slept in foxholes, not on cots. So aboard ship we put our cots topside, and also got protection from the blazing sun by hanging shelter halves from anything available, such as the ship's rail.

I had three guard details on the way up to Kwajalein. I had no idea what I was guarding unless it was our company's tanks and contents from other troops aboard our LST. Of course, we did laundry, cleaned weapons, and had talks by officers regarding details of our landing. Otherwise we just lazed around. On June 6 we arrived at Kwajalein.

JAMES C. CHANDLER, Company B

Sailing from Guadalcanal to Guam we had on board a group of old infantrymen in the 4th Marines. Some of them had been with Carlson's Raiders on Guadalcanal. They were the meanest bunch of humans I had ever seen. One of the Navy crewmen broke into the beer supply, and a bunch of the 4th got rowdy. A fight broke out, and the captain, armed with a Thompson submachine gun, was ready to start shooting. But just then a Negro cook turned a fire hose on the group having so much fun and broke up the fight.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

When we left Guadalcanal we didn't know our destination officially, but most of us thought it was Guam. The weather was bad at first, but the chow on LST 247 was very good. One morning I had eggs sunny side up for breakfast. Tank maintenance went on. We ran the tanks for 16 minutes on Friday, June 2, and again on the 4th. After D-8's batteries were charged up, I replaced them in the tank. Another convoy joined ours on June 4, and Corporal James E. Shiley, a CP, got malaria. On June 5 we were told our destination was Guam and Saipan, and no one seemed disturbed over it.

DALE L. BARKER, Company D

Soon after boarding LST 220 I made friends with the Navy radiomen. I stood a few radio watches and looked after some of their equipment. One advantage to me was that I could get daily news on the radio when it was first received. D Company commander, Lieutenant Robert E. McDowell, assigned me to the company maintenance tractor for the landing. Staff Sergeant Arthur W. "Pop" King was the head of the maintenance crew aboard the tractor. Besides D Company, we had on board some Battalion communication personnel, including Gunner James L. Osborne, the Battalion assistant communication officer, and Tech Sergeant Raymond J. Martin, the Battalion communication chief.

LAYOVER AT KWAJALEIN

Our three-day stay in the lagoon of Kwajalein Atoll from June 6 to 9 was a part of the staging process for the invasions of Saipan and Guam. A huge fleet had assembled there, all in preparation for action in the Marianas. Ships were coming and going every day. This visit was not to the part of Kwajalein Atoll where we had landed just a few months before. This time we were at Kwajalein Island, in the same lagoon, but some 55 miles south of Roi and Namur. The ships took on water, fuel, and supplies. There was some movement of infantry and other troops from ship to ship, but not among the First Armored. When we departed on Friday, June 9, we thought we were on our way to Guam.

BYRON G. SNEVA, Company C

When we put in at the southern end of the lagoon at Kwajalein Atoll, all of us would have liked going by Roi and Namur to see what had happened there since we left five months earlier. There was no "Lights out" in the lagoon even though the Japs were only 600 miles away. We watched four flattops and 17 transports enter the lagoon and join all the other ships there. There was a big beautiful white hospital ship lying farther down the lagoon. While we were there our LSTs took on fuel, water and supplies. The troops we had brought with us went off, and 200 of the 21st Marines came aboard. They got no blankets, just pads and shelter-halves, and had to sleep topside for the rest of the trip.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

At Kwajalein there were hundreds of ships, more than I had ever seen in one place at the same time. Lying in harbor, some of us went swimming off the ship.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

I worked all night (nine hours) on June 8 loading supplies onto a transport in the Kwajalein anchorage. LST 78 and other ships in our convoy were also taking on fuel, water and supplies. The Marine infantry who had come with us from Guadalcanal got off, and F Company of the 22d Marines boarded. We listened to Tokyo Rose on the radio one evening. She played real nice U.S. music, interspersed with comments about 4-F's at home with our wives and girl friends.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

We remained at anchor in the lagoon of Kwajalein Atoll for three days, taking on supplies. On the night of the 8th, Marine infantry were brought aboard, and at 1400 on the 9th we left Kwajalein for Guam and Saipan.

KWAJALEIN TO THE MARIANAS

From Kwajalein men and tanks of the Battalion were aboard LSTs in two separate convoys traveling not very far apart. Essentially, companies A and B were in one convoy, C and D in the other. Looking ahead to our primary objective, the Guam landing, only a few days away—we thought—most of us concentrated our thoughts and preparations on the June 18 landing. Task Force 53, however, of which the First Armored was a part, was designated as a reserve force for the June 15 landing on Saipan. Our immediate destination out of Kwajalein, therefore, was for waters east of Saipan to await assurance that the Saipan invasion was going well. Even the admirals and generals expected the scheduled landings on Guam to proceed on June 18. In the First Armored all hands continued to be briefed on the island, the enemy, and the landing plans. Tanks, weapons, ammunition, and personal gear were made ready for combat.

BYRON G. SNEVA, Company C

The trip from Kwajalein to the Marianas was quiet for a few days. We went over the plans for the landing and serviced the tanks, but mostly I read. We watched another convoy moving along near us toward Guam. On June 17, supposedly the day before the invasion, the infantry had a battle dress inspection. We broke out our grenades. I loaded my .45 magazines, cleaned the grease out of the 37mm, and filled my .30-caliber ready boxes.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

On June 10 we were given more details of the battle plan. The 2d and 4th Marine Divisions would land on Saipan on June 15, three days before our landing on the 18th. When they did land, we listened by radio as the first reports of the fighting came over the radio. On the 17th we started the tank engines and found that D-8 was out of time after (David L.) Del Vecchio pulled the magnetos. I gave D-6 a quart of castor oil for its sticky valves.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

Out of Kwajalein it was the same life aboard ship. The convoy traveled slow by day and fast by night. We had no fresh water showers at all, but did have boredom, uneasiness, and uncertainty. During the first few days we played poker and craps, got a tan, speculated, and had conversations. Later the ship seemed quieter, and casual discussions disappeared, and the tension slowly relaxed. The sea was so vast that there seemed no end to the voyage, and it was so calm that danger seemed remote. The days passed into days, and small events that broke up the routine became important, like taking atabrine tablets to guard against malaria. After the Saipan landing, we would sit and listen to reports from scouting and fire control planes over the TCS radio.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

By June 13 we began to get news by radio, first of the bombardment of islands in the Marianas, then of the American landings on Saipan on June 15. On that day, June 15, aboard LST 78, we were issued personal weapons ammunition for the Guam landing. I drew 195 rounds for my M-1 carbine and eight grenades. We had already been belting machine gun ammo aboard ship. A belt held 250 rounds, which fit into a metal ammo box. I had 4500 rounds, in 18 boxes, for my machine gun.

THE AIR ATTACK

Beginning right after the Saipan landing, Japanese torpedo bombers struck at ships in both the convoys carrying the First Armored. The main attacks seem to have been on June 15 against the convoy with Companies A and B aboard, on June 17 for the convoy carrying Companies C and D. Only one ship was lost in these attacks. LCI 468 was damaged so severely by a torpedo that it had to be sunk.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

At sunset on June 15 several Jap torpedo bombers attacked the convoy, but did little damage. Three of them were shot down. I followed one of them from the time it was hit till it crashed into the sea, the first Jap plane I had seen shot down. There were lots of cheers from Marines aboard ship. After that we had several alerts each day, but none were the real thing.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

On June 15 the rumor on our ship was that a torpedo launched by a sub had passed under our bow, but I never saw it. But right at evening chow our convoy was attacked by five planes. Two of them tried to get the destroyer that was with us, but their bombs were near misses. They all then strafed the convoy, which was strung out in two long lines. The planes weren't reluctant to come in low, making three or four passes. It was incomprehensible to us that those planes could fly through all that fire without getting hit! The destroyer got one plane. On one of the passes, a plane was raking the whole convoy lengthwise. As he approached LST 78 and I could see his guns flashing, I dove under the bow 40mm gun mount. It was painfully noisy under there, so I hurriedly crawled out just in time to see him hit the water right alongside the ship. Everybody on deck was cussing, laughing, and cheering like maniacs. We had never seen Japanese planes before, but we would see too many in the next twelve months. The next day, June 16, each ship's flag in the convoy flew at half-mast for a sailor killed in that raid.

DONALD FERCHAU, Company A

Five Jap planes picked a fight with our convoy one day, and everybody except Naval gun crews were ordered below decks. A dumb order, I thought. If Marines couldn't fight, at least they should be allowed to watch. But I had the best seat in the house. From the starboard door of the galley, I watched a hopscotching dive-bomber trying to take out a destroyer. Kamikaze wasn't in vogue yet, but if it had been, the pilot had a perfect shot at that destroyer. As he gained altitude to miss the ship, he exposed his belly and was exploded into oblivion.

Another pilot made his fly-over and, in coming around for another try, exposed his complete topside, and was brought down by 3"-50s, .40-40s, and numerous rounds of 20mm from our ship. I know it was our LST which got him, for I saw the tracers going in and the smoke coming out. I also believe that, as he was coming around, I looked him right in the eye, sneered, and gave him the finger. I believe that was enough of a distraction that I was tempted to put a Jap flag decal on the turret of good ole A-17. At any rate, scuttlebutt had it that all ships in the convoy had three Jap flags on their bridges by morning. Two of the rascals got away, probably damaged. Even a movie in Peoria couldn't have topped that show.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

While we were standing in chow line waiting for supper on June 15, general quarters went off. Several Jap torpedo bombers were attacking our convoy. First they went for the destroyer escort and then went for us in the LSTs. One came in from the left flank, another from the right rear. The one from the left came first, and we didn't know if he strafed or dropped a fish. We were plenty excited, but—funny—not scared. The left flanker turned and headed out, while the other came up from the rear. Just as he came even with our stern, smoke poured from him. He crashed and exploded approximately 100 yards off our starboard rear. I don't believe the convoy sustained much damage. One report was that a man on an LSM was shot and killed by strafing. Personally I didn't see any strafing. He was probably hit by one of our antiaircraft shells, which were flying in every direction. Word also came that the can [destroyer] shot down a plane.

ROBERT A. FISH, Company A

When we were attacked by Jap torpedo bombers in waters off Saipan, I remember standing by the potato lockers on the top deck of our LST and watching the planes fly in between the two columns of the LSTs with the Jap thumbing his nose at us.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

From Guadalcanal to the Marianas I recall performing repairs to radio equipment in the radio shack of the LST on which I was embarked, as well as standing occasional watches with its Navy radio operators. On one occasion, during general quarters, I was paged on the ship's PA system and instructed to "lay up to the radio shack on the double." While thus hastening to the radio shack via an outside ladder on the ship's aft superstructure, I caught sight of a formation of single-engine, low-wing aircraft at mast-head level, flying at rather slow speed. These aircraft were under heavy fire from anti-aircraft batteries of various ships in our convoy. I saw a direct hit on the nearest aircraft (an HE round nearly dead center in its radial engine), and watched it pass directly overhead before it plunged into the water between the two columns of LSTs of our convoy. That airplane had large red "meat-balls" painted on the underside of its wings: My first sight of enemy aircraft in combat!

Within what seemed a split second of the foregoing action, another aircraft of the same formation launched a torpedo from a position forward and to the left of our ship, and no more than a thousand yards distant. While the ships in the convoy continued to pour antiaircraft fire at the plane, I saw the torpedo pass, in a rather unsteady fashion, between our ship and the LST following us in the column. The torpedo then appeared to stabilize on its course and depth and intercepted one of the LSTs in the other column. But, due to the LST's shallow draft, the missile continued harmlessly under the ship and disappeared in the distance. My last glimpse of this exciting surface-to-air naval warfare was that of our escorting destroyer steaming away from the convoy at flank speed in an

effort to draw the enemy aircraft away from the troop ships. Arriving at the radio shack, I ducked inside, donned a headset, and took up the duties for which I had been summoned. Outside, the noise of battle continued unabated for some time before we secured from general quarters. So far as I can recall, this small, brief engagement resulted in no casualties to our side (at least within our convoy), but it marked the opening of the Battle of the Philippine Sea, which delayed our assault on Guam.

BYRON G. SNEVA, Company C

On June 15, D-Day for Saipan, we saw a little action. At about 1700 three Jap planes attacked the other convoy just on the horizon. The ships put up one hell of a pile of ack-ack and shot down one. We could see the bombs flashing and one cloud of yellow-brown smoke. We didn't know what the damage was to that convoy. We were on GQ all that time. Later on we had to get down below, and damned near suffocated. It was hell down there, cooped up like a bunch of canned sardines.

On June 17, at sunset, our convoy was attacked by four Jap torpedo bombers. They came in at us just a few feet off the water, out of the setting sun. One dropped a fish and hit an LCI in the bow. But as soon as it came up out of its run, it was hit, smoked half way across the sky, then burst into flames and fell into the sea, a big black smoke cloud marking the spot. Another Jap plane exploded in mid-air about 500 yards over our bow and fell in a million pieces. Everybody up on deck was cheering, forgetting all the risks they were taking, but none of us wanted to be cooped up down below next to the stacks of 5-inch ammo. The ARB (amphibious repair boat) went back to see what it could do for the bow-less LCI. We left them far behind.

On the 18th, the original date for landing on Guam, all the ensigns flew at half-mast as a salute to the twelve men who lost their lives on the LCI. Two days later, June 20, GQ sounded early in the morning, and guns started blasting away. I was topside in nothing flat, just in time to see a US plane go down in smoke. The destroyer shot it down while the aircraft was still unidentified. After the can opened up on it, some more came up, and then everybody was shooting. Then, too late, they were identified.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

Almost every night at sunset we had alerts of enemy air attack, which never materialized, until one night as I moved slowly to "General Quarters," the real thing happened. I saw five or six Japanese torpedo bombers broad on our starboard beam coming right at us. Machine guns on our LSTs commenced firing, and I remember thinking we were more likely to be killed or wounded by our own fire than by the enemy. One aircraft flew right over our ship and dropped his torpedo precisely right to hit an escorting LCI (Landing Craft, Infantry) just forward of its bridge, blowing off its bow. I was astounded as I had been told our landing craft, including LSTs, were too shallow draft for a torpedo to hit. The LCI was so badly damaged that it was sunk after

the surviving crew was removed. While it was a tragedy that any ship was hit and Americans killed, far better an LCI than an LST packed with troops with all that ammunition stowed under our vehicles on the tank deck. It was reported that three of the Japanese planes were shot down.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

At about sundown on June 17 seven Jap torpedo planes attacked us. One was shot down, and possibly two more were. But an LCI took a torpedo aimed at an LST and lost its bow and much of its crew. The LCI didn't sink right away, but on the 18th, after the crew was evacuated, a destroyer sank the damaged LCI. There were burials at sea and flags at half-mast. There was another Jap attack that evening, but no damage. Then on the 20th the gun crews in our convoy shot down one of our own planes.

HOWARD VAN KESSEL, Company D

On June 17 we were 100 miles off Saipan on the top deck of our LST, waiting for the day we would hit Guam. At about sundown general quarters sounded, and we noticed three Jap torpedo bombers heading towards our convoy. As they came to within 500 yards or so, they dropped torpedoes headed right for us. But an LCI alongside seemed to try to get hit rather than let it hit an LST. The LCI was hit, and the explosion sent metal flying. Men were huddled together on the top deck, without shirts or steel helmets, unprepared for this raid. A Marine standing in front of me fell to the deck with a piece of shrapnel to his head. He never knew what hit him, and was brain-dead for two days before he died. He was buried at sea. Immediately after the attack, the order came through that no one would be allowed on deck without a helmet. This was standard after that.

EDWARD G. RIZKALLA, Company C

I was topside on the LST taking us to invade Guam, when we had an air attack by several torpedo bombers. An LCI was alongside of us in convoy formation, about 100 yards to our left. As I looked up, a plane came down on this small ship. There were two gunners on the stern of the ship, on a rotating platform with two .50-caliber machine guns. The plane came down, idled its engine, dropped the bomb, and made a direct hit on these two sailors, still strapped to their seats. I saw them blown about fifty feet in the air, still together, and fall into the ocean, alongside of our ship. I hope they were killed instantly because, if they were still alive, that was a hell of a way to go.

JOSEPH VOIGT, Company D

George F. Roberts and I volunteered for antiaircraft duty aboard the LST. We were assigned a .50-caliber machine gun to man, and man it we did. We literally slept with that gun for about two months. The only times we'd ever leave it was to go to the head or get in the chow line. I know we all remember the morning the three U.S. Navy

TBFs (torpedo bombers) came in unexpectedly. The radio operator aboard our LST started firing a 20mm cannon at them, and then the whole convoy opened up. I'm happy to say George and I never got off a round because the damned gun had jammed, and we were madder than hell. But after we realized what had happened, we were thankful that we hadn't fired a round.

FLOATING RESERVE FOR SAIPAN

Not willing to let the threat to Saipan go unchallenged, the Japanese responded quickly. Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa brought a fleet of nine carriers, with supporting battleships, cruisers, and destroyers, out of the Philippines, heading for Saipan. By June 17 those ships had reached a point 700 miles west of the Marianas. Their object was to relieve the garrison on Saipan and break up the invasion. Admiral Raymond A. Spruance sent Task Force 58 under Admiral Marc Mitscher to meet them. In the Battle of the Philippine Sea on June 19 and 20 the Japanese were decisively defeated and routed with disastrous losses. The downing of 243 Japanese planes on the 19th is famous as the Great Marianas Turkey Shoot. Action on the 20th is remembered for Mitscher's decision to turn on ships' lights at night to guide returning U.S. planes to their carriers.

The dangers inherent in the Japanese naval challenge was reason enough to delay the Guam landing, which had been scheduled for June 18. When, in addition, the battle on Saipan met stiffer resistance than expected, Spruance decided to continue holding the Guam force as a floating reserve until it could be determined that reinforcements would not be required on Saipan. Not till June 25 did Admiral Spruance decide that the 3d Marine Division and supporting units, including Companies C and D of the First Armored, could be released. The 1st Marine Provisional Brigade, with our Companies A and B, were held in place till June 30. By those dates fuel and provisions in the invasion fleet were seriously depleted and it was necessary to restage for the Guam landing. The ships were ordered to Eniwetok Atoll in the Marshalls.

For about ten days—fifteen days for some—the convoys bearing the First Armored and other troops moved back and forth in the seas 150 to 300 miles east of Saipan. There was growing strain among the men aboard ship from their long confinement and from the uncertainty about what their next action might be. Morale was not helped when the ships began to exhaust their fuel, food, and water supplies and living conditions on board deteriorated. Interest in the battles on Saipan and in the Philippine Sea was keen, but radio reports gave few details.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

As the 3d Marine Division and the 1st Provisional Brigade were the floating reserve for the Saipan operation, and as that turned into a fierce and protracted battle, our ships kept "cutting holes in the sea" within easy distance of Saipan. Each night we waited to see which way the convoy would turn to find out whether we were going to be committed to Saipan or were still going to Guam.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

As floating reserves for the Saipan invasion we sailed back and forth in an east-west direction. On June 17 we were notified that W-Day for Guam was being postponed from the 18th to the 19th. By the 18th, W-Day had been postponed indefinitely. We had two air raid alarms on June 19, but no planes appeared. I began to get eight-hour 40mm gun watches. In the following week we heard by radio of the naval action later called the Battle of the Philippine Sea, with its "Great Turkey Shoot."

LST 78 was running low on food and water. On the 18th the ship cut off our supply of fresh water for washing and shaving. It seemed by then that we had bitter, green-hued marmalade and pancakes about every second chow. On July 1 we were informed that we were going to Eniwetok. On July 4, on the way there, all ships in the convoy celebrated the holiday by firing off their guns and shooting up flares and smoke and star shells. Corporal Willy (William D.) Germain and I spent much time leaning on the ship's rail and talking about hunting, fishing, camping, etc. We played a game, each in turn whistling a song and the other trying to guess it. At our reunions now, Willy doesn't remember any of this.

WILLIAM D. GERMAIN, Company A

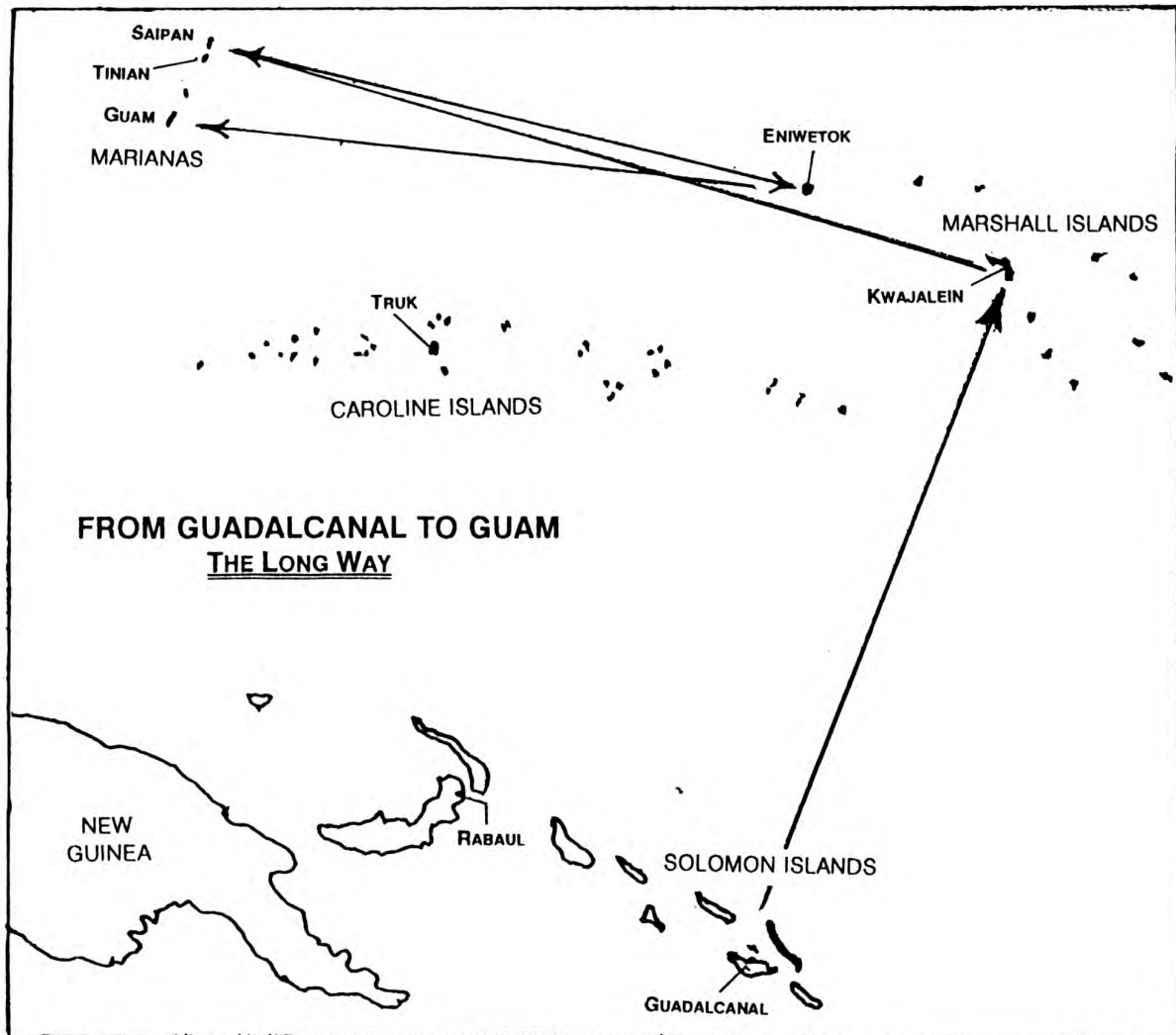
We went round and round, waiting and wondering if we were to be used as reserves or support. We stayed so long that we ate up most of the supplies and had no bread, just crackers. We called our ship the cracker barrel.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

B Company's radio jeep was lashed down on the upper deck of our LST. On June 15 (D-Day for Saipan) I tuned its receiver to the frequency being used by a flight of U.S. Naval or Marine aircraft supporting the invasion of Saipan. The code name of the unit was "Mincemeat," and its leader, Mincemeat 6, was cautioning his pilots to make certain that the tanks they had in sight were hostile and not friendly before attacking them. It seemed apparent, from the tenor and substance of this radio traffic, that American air superiority prevailed over Saipan and that the invasion was progressing well. But because major elements of the Japanese Navy confronted Admiral Spruance's carriers, he was compelled to withdraw his task force from its planned support of the invasion of Guam and direct it against the Japanese naval threat. The Battle of the Philippine Sea resulted in a major American victory, with the Japanese fleet and its aircraft thoroughly decimated, but it also caused postponement of the Guam invasion.

BYRON G. SNEVA, Company C

After the landing was postponed, our convoy just cruised around and around and back and forth. We saw carriers, transports, and a hospital ship doing the same thing. We listened to radio reports of the naval battle and the combat on Saipan. In a few days the chow got very limited, and they started turning off the blowers in the troop



compartments. We nearly died down there of diesel fumes and heat. One night I took my sack topside and slept on the gas drums; that nearly broke my back, but it was better than in the compartment. I spent a lot of time reading, sitting around in gab sessions, and trying to keep cool. We worked out a system of what to talk about evenings. Every other night it was to be women, and all other nights we would talk on any different subject.

DONALD L. FERCHAU, Company A

After the air raids things got dull. Serving as floating reserve was not our idea of a good time. We could hear, but not see, the bombardment of Saipan. The passing days brought little else but boredom and low food rations except for traditional beans and Spam. I never had Spam fixed so many ways in my life. We were finally ordered back to Eniwetok to restock with food and water.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

For days we just shuttled back and forth, "wearing a rut in the ocean," east of Saipan. Radio reports told of a big air battle and sea battle with the Japanese navy. There was a lot of scuttlebutt, but none of us knew anything. They announced one thing, and the word was changed right away. I had been bored with life other times, but never that bad. It was just wait, wait all the time. We didn't know a damn thing. It was enough to drive a guy nuts. We were allowed to write two letters. Finally we were ordered to Eniwetok in the western Marshalls.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

Life on board ship got very tedious. All we did was sail back and forth, waiting. I would certainly recognize that spot in the Pacific if we ever returned. We plowed one hell of a rut there. We kept going around in circles till June 29, with the food and water running very low, and all of us going crazy from being cooped up. On June 29 an announcement was made that we were turning back and going to Eniwetok Atoll in the western Marshalls for supplies.

GEORGE F. ROBERTS, Company D

While we were sailing around all over the South Pacific, east of Saipan, and generally getting bored, we had one engine go out on our LST. Somebody came around asking for volunteers to help the machinist's mates work on their engine. I had seen only one diesel engine that big before—a whopper, almost as big as a living room. I handed them wrenches, helped clean up, etc. since I was also anxious to get back underway. There is nothing so helpless as an LST, even with both engines working and the steering operating properly.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

On June 25, Staff Sergeant "Squeaky" (Thomas A.) Timmons and I were whiling away the hours topside on our LST and eavesdropping on blinker light signals to and from other vessels in the convoy. We were startled to read, "We are returning Eniwetok." By this time, due to our extended time at sea, our ship had cut back to two meals per day, as rations had grown short. The diversion to Eniwetok was necessary to resupply the ship, if for no other reason.

FROM THE MARIANAS TO ENIWETOK

The trip from the waters near Saipan to Eniwetok Atoll in the Marshalls took about five days. Living conditions aboard the ships continued the same, or in some ways worse, as the store of food and water diminished. LSTs bearing First Armored Companies C and D arrived at Eniwetok on June 30, those with Companies A and B aboard not till July 5. Elements of H&S Company were with both groups.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

The LSTs were built to accommodate 125 troops; we had 250 Marines on most of them. As a result the weather deck was crowded with trucks and equipment. Tarpaulins and truck covers were used to protect the Marines from the elements. Machine guns were attached to the truck pedestals, and other machine guns were rigged to the deck to increase our anti-aircraft protection. Food and water were limited. Bathing was to grab a bit of soap when it rained and try to get cleaned up in the tropical downpour. Invariably the rain stopped when one was all soaped up, which required the wash-down to be from a bucket of salt water. We had rashes and were sticky from the salt water all of the time. Our laundry was tying our rather ragged uniforms to a line and towing them alongside the ship for a time, which at least got the smell of sweat out of them. These crowded conditions in the tropics were uncomfortable. Fresh water was very limited, and the food got worse as the voyage continued.

RICHARD ZENGER, Company D

Going back to Eniwetok our ship ran out of food. We must have had at least one infantry company aboard in addition to our amtank company. People were sleeping all over the deck. Over-the-rail toilets had been set up to accommodate the troops. They consisted of a water trough built of several halves of oil drums (halved lengthwise and welded together) with sea water running through under wooden seats spanning the drum halves.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

Robert C. Shepard in D Company had a little dog, Snapper, with him as a mascot. On the way to Eniwetok, on June 27, Snapper fell over the side of our LST, but was later picked up by a minesweeper.

THOMAS T. OYLER, Company C

A long trip to Guam was made somewhat shorter for me because one of the four in our sleeping quarters was a former tugboat captain from Seattle. The Navy had flown him down from the Aleutian Islands because he was a pontoon expert who was supposed to be able to help solve the expected problems of getting the heavy equipment up onto the reef on the beaches near Agat. He had a million sea stories to tell, which helped pass the time.

ROBERT W. PIERCE, Company A

On that trip, aboard the LST, enterprising Marines had brewed raisin jack, which was fermenting in small wooden barrels. The barrels had been placed inside the vehicle in the ballast tanks, which were accessible by removing plates from the inside tank wall. On one routine tank inspection, the inspecting officer was almost overcome by the fumes

and ordered the wooden barrels removed immediately and the contents dumped overboard. Some Marines had tin cups in hand to savor one last drop before the tangy liquid disappeared into the deep blue sea.

EDWARD G. RIZKALLA, Company C

Aboard ship I witnessed a poker game between four sailors playing on a large mess table. Each player had a second next to him with a large burlap bag that reached the floor and had one end tacked to the table. This was a no-limit game, and you have to remember that these sailors had been on board for months with nothing to do with their money but gamble. I can tell you that the money that piled up on that table was like a huge ice cream cone several feet high. There were thousands of dollars, and dollars then weren't like dollars now. There were no small bills. When one sailor won the pot, his second would rake it into the burlap bag. When the game ended, the winner's bag—about a foot and a half wide and three feet high—would be filled to the top. I'll never forget that game.

ENIWETOK

Eniwetok Atoll, in the extreme northwest end of the Marshalls, had been in American hands less than five months when the Guam invasion fleet came back from the Marianas. With an excellent harbor inside its lagoon, it had already become an important U.S. naval base. The big Japanese bases of Rabaul and Truk—as well as closer bases such as Wotje and Jaluit in the Marshalls—had been neutralized and bypassed, making Eniwetok relatively secure from air raids.

Not only the ships, but also the Marine troops, needed to be restored. The commanders were seriously concerned about the morale of troops confined on crowded, hot, ill-provisioned troop ships and LSTs for five or six weeks straight. A schedule was set up so that men could rotate ashore on deserted islets of the atoll for exercise, and relaxation. There were no facilities on these tiny patches of ground, just sparse brush and scrubby palms. It was possible to swim in the adjacent shallow waters and observe some unusual sea life. It did feel good to get on solid ground, and just leaving the ship for two or three hours was a welcome relief from shipboard monotony. Food on the LSTs began to improve, and some ships had movies in the evenings. A backlog of mail from the States caught up with us, the first since leaving Guadalcanal.

BYRON G. SNEVA, Company C

We spent the whole day of June 30 going around in circles off Eniwetok, awaiting our turn to enter the lagoon. When we finally made it at about 1800, we saw what a really thriving war center it was, with ships and planes of all types coming and going. That evening we got showers, with hot and cold water, our first fresh water showers since the last week in May.

The next day, July 1, we went ashore to one of the little reef islands and spent

most of the day there. We played a little touch football and hunted for shells. That day we got straight scoop on the high casualty rate on Saipan and the plans for Guam. We would stay at Eniwetok to give time for reinforcements to come from Pearl Harbor. Altogether our crews went ashore four times for exercise and swimming, but I missed two of those trips because of a blister on one of my toes. A lot of back mail came for us. On July 5 we took our tanks to the beach and put in a new section of track. Then we had our cocoa, C rations and joe. It was fun, comparable to a picnic with a flat tire to fix on the side. On Friday, July 14, some of the boys went over to the *USS Rixy* for communion.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

We sighted land early in the morning of June 30, but it was 2020 before LST 247 dropped anchor in the lagoon of Eniwetok Atoll. The next day, July 1, we were refueled from a liberty ship and took on supplies all day and all the following night. Walker, a Navy crewman on our LST, broke his arm as he worked on a supply ship. After being up all night loading supplies, I slept till noon on July 2. Twice, on July 3 and 8, we were taken ashore to small islands for a few hours of exercise. We had mail call on three days, and on July 7 I received fifteen letters. I had guard duty once and worked on most days to keep the tanks in good condition. Our ship continued to take on supplies and water. We heard on July 12 that Saipan had been secured. On July 15 we weighed anchor and left for Guam. I had never seen so many ships.

WILLIAM MOIR, Company D

On June 30 we dropped anchor at Eniwetok Atoll in the Marshalls. There were many, many ships there, maybe more than I had ever seen before. We were allowed five-minute freshwater showers, a special treat. Supplies were continuously brought on board ship. We were permitted off onto a small island, going by Higgins boat (LCVP). For the return trip the boat got stuck on the coral reef, and we had to wade in water almost up to our necks to reach it. On July 4 we went ashore again for some exercise, and later had an excellent Fourth of July dinner. Besides guard duty and card playing, we also had physical drills. Lieutenant Ted (Theodore A.) Burge, an excellent speaker, would many times get the fellows together for discussions about the war and the part we were playing in it. On July 15 we lifted anchor at 1015 and headed for Guam.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

Our convoy arrived at Eniwetok in the morning of July 5. There were hundreds of ships in the lagoon there. LST 78 lowered its ramp so that we could swim. Some of us were diving and doing "cannon balls" from the side of the bow. We did this several days while in the Eniwetok lagoon. So far as I can remember, we never for any of these swims had a lifeguard posted nor anyone with a rifle on lookout for sharks. It was a welcome diversion and a lot of fun.

On July 6 the Task Force Commander relayed a message that we all had rest and relaxation coming and would all have a turn at a beer party ashore. On LST 78, F Company of the 22d Marines was to go ashore on the 6th, the balance of us on the 7th. When the three Higgins boats arrived for F Company, every Marine on the ship scrambled into them. There must have been 800 Marines (a guess) and as many swabbies on that little island. There were some trees and quite a bit of brush to get under, out of the sun. The Navy had beer and food; we had diddly. Most of us didn't even have canteens with water. We spent ten hours on that oven. When some Navy beer and food got stolen, a couple of fights occurred. We swam, and slept in the shade, and bitched. Some beer party we had.

We had mail calls on July 8 and 9. Saipan was declared secured on the 10th. On the 13th the tank commanders of Company A all congregated on another ship, and much information was revealed. In the landing, we were to go inland about 1000 yards. We were to take no prisoners, but very few Japs ever surrendered anyway. W-Day for Guam was to be July 21. Our convoy left Eniwetok on July 15.

ROBERT A. FISH, Company A

Arrived back in Eniwetok, everybody was out of cigarettes. So I went ashore and got a couple of boxes of Camels from money collected aboard ship.

RICHARD ZENGER, Company D

I remember a glorious afternoon on the beach at Eniwetok, swimming and drinking beer. In addition to very colorful fish, there were giant clams in the water with squiggly purple lines where the shell halves joined together. I remember the vast number of ships in the lagoon and the Navy guys talking to each other with blinker lights.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

We saw hundreds of ships of all kinds in the harbor at Eniwetok. On July 7 we went ashore for exercise on a barren island, the first time off ship since May. The next day I got paid \$15 but had nothing to spend it on; money out there didn't mean much. Mail came aboard, and I got about twelve letters. It sure was swell to get mail once again. On July 13 we got another chance to go ashore, to Engebi Island. This was a valuable island because of its airstrip, and you could still see the scars of battle from the heavy fighting that took place when it was taken. In the evening we saw a movie, then returned to the ship at about 2300.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

On July 7 at Eniwetok we were allowed to go ashore for some exercise on a barren island where there were a few birds, but they left when we arrived. A few of us waded the coral, passing four smaller islands to a larger one. When we finally reached

it, we literally flopped down from exhaustion. We had been instructed to be back aboard ship by 1500, but we had no intention of doing that and, besides, we couldn't get back because the tide had come in. We just walked around, and then shot the bull with some Seabees. Then we ran into the crew of our LST 477 on their way to a movie ashore. They were to return to the ship after the show, and we decided that was swell. We had chow at a Seabee camp, where they treated us great and even gave us two cans of beer. The movie was *Once upon a Time*, a crazy thing. When we arrived back at the ship, Lieutenant Ronald Buckner went into a rage. He made us, Ralph R. McCormack, John "Pat" Greene and me, stand in three circles topside for three days from 0800 to 1700.

APPROACH TO GUAM

All the LSTs bearing First Armored personnel left Eniwetok on July 15, 1944, headed for Guam with a landing date of July 21. The spirit aboard ship was very similar to what it had been five weeks earlier when the target date was June 18. There was the usual final briefings and the close attention to the combat-readiness of tanks, weapons, and personal gear.

HARRY PAUL, *Company D*

It rained the first two days on the way to Guam. Most of the time we were getting ready for the landing. We started all tanks looking for problems, and I worked on the tractor and on D-17's gyro. On July 19 we gassed up all tanks so they were prepared to leave on 15 minutes' notice. On the day before the landing, everyone was jittery. It wasn't like the Marshalls because everyone knew what to expect this time.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, *Company B*

Leaving Eniwetok on July 15, we learned W-Day would now be July 21, H-Hour at 0830. We were schooled on newer maps captured on Saipan. The details of our procedure were reviewed over again and again.

WILLIAM F. COWGILL, *Company B*

On our LST going to Guam a company of Raiders broke into the ship's beer and were sent into Guam, on the first wave of infantry, with the threat of prison if they survived.

BYRON G. SNEVA, *Company C*

I always enjoyed the beauty of sunsets and the moon in the Pacific. I saw sunsets of a pale lavender with shots of burgundy here and there. I remember a moon, getting bigger every night, that seemed to grasp you firmly into its bosom, where it told you stories and tales of your youth and even sang you the old songs.

The trip to Guam was quiet. W-Day minus 1, July 20, was a very casual day. I imagine civilians picture the day as a lot of commotion, with everybody sharpening their knives, reading Bibles, and talking of home in a hysterical way. But it was just like most other days except for maybe an hour when we went over the plans. I played double solitaire with (James W.) Graham a lot that day. At 1500 they turned on the showers. I had a good long one, and that felt good.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

On our way to Guam at last, everyone was in good spirits and feeling eager, ready for anything, or as Marines would say, *Gung ho*. We spent that last week aboard ship preparing in various ways for the landing. Bob (Robert W.) Pierce, from my crew, cut my hair with scissors from a 35-cent sewing kit. I daubed green paint on my knife sheath, pack, canteen cover, etc., as camouflage. I cleaned my A-10 machine gun, the tripod, and my carbine again. I washed socks and a towel.

Card games occurred every day and night, and some ran continuously. Pretty soon the players were narrowed down to five or six, and then to just a couple. One man in the 22d Marines aboard had over \$1700 in winnings, and in 1944 that was one hell of a lot of money.

On July 20, the day before the Guam landing, I had eight hours of guard duty. I then washed clothes, cleaned my machine gun again, and greased the pivot pin of my machine gun shield so that it would traverse easily. The shield, of perhaps 1/4-inch steel plate and approximately 3 feet by 3-1/2 feet in size was mounted so that the gun was between two steel plates. There was ample space between the twin plates—perhaps 8 to 10 inches—so that the gunner had good vision. The shield was just in front of the machine gunner and at a slant to deflect small shrapnel, machine gun fire, or small arms fire. The Navy let us have fresh water for showers late in the day. I attended church services, as did most men. We could see flashes from naval gunfire on the horizon after dark.

ROBERT A. FISH, Company A

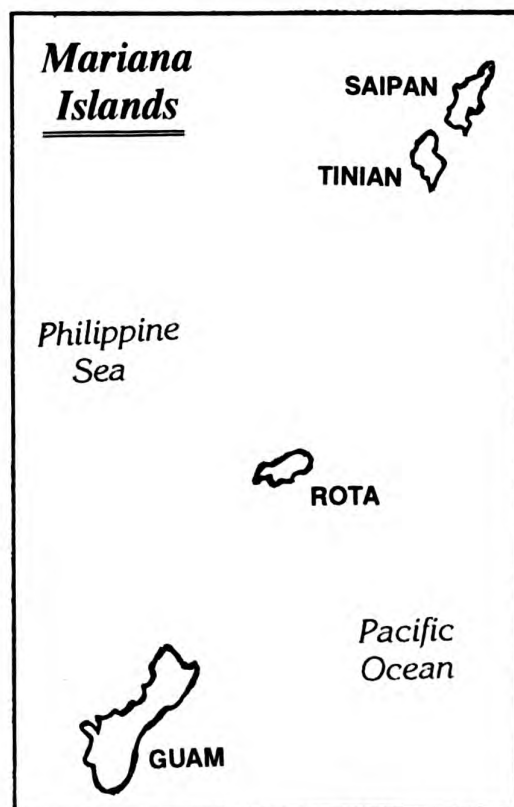
Corporal Freeman N. Bousman, a tank commander in my platoon, came to me the day before the landing. He was carrying a sack full of money—\$2000 to \$2500—that he had won at poker or dice. He wanted to know what to do with the money. We went to the ship's exec and checked it into the ship's safe. I have often wondered what ever happened to that money. Bousman was killed in the landing when a shot hit the turret of his tank.

CHAPTER
NINE

The Liberation of Guam

Guam was the first U.S. territory to be retaken from the Japanese. The Mariana Islands are 15 in number, of which the largest are Guam, Saipan, Rota, and Tinian. The group was discovered and claimed for Spain in 1521 by Ferdinand Magellan. Spain actually occupied the Marianas in 1665 and ruled the group till she was defeated in 1898 in the Spanish-American War. Spain ceded Guam to the United States in 1899 and sold the rest of the Marianas to Germany. In World War I Japan seized the German-held Marianas and, in 1919, retained them under a League of Nations mandate. Under its treaty commitments, the U.S. did not fortify Guam or strengthen its garrison. Government was administered by the U.S. Navy, under which the island became a fueling station for Navy ships and a communication center with an important radio station. The trans-Pacific cable also had a station there, and Pan American Airways' big clipper planes stopped there for refueling. The principal U.S. facilities before the war were the Piti Navy Yard on Apra Harbor, the Marine Barracks at Sumay on the Orote Peninsula, schools, hospitals, and various government departments in Agana and elsewhere.

Guam has a land area of about 210 square miles, more than half the total area for



all the Marianas. It is a mountainous island fringed by coral reefs. In fact, all the islands of the Marianas are simply exposed mountain peaks or ridges of a mostly submerged mountain range extending over 1500 miles almost to Japan. The highest



mountains on Guam are in the south, some reaching 1300 feet. The wooded north is mostly a plateau about 500 feet above the sea. The chief town was Agana on the west coast. The best anchorage, also on the west coast, was Apra Harbor, protected by the Orote Peninsula to the south and Cabras island to the north.

The native Guamanian population is largely Chamorro, a people of Indonesian stock with an admixture of Spanish and other ethnic groups. When the Spanish first occupied the Marianas, it took them 130 years to overcome the stubborn resistance of the warlike Chamorros, many of whom left the Marianas permanently. Eventually the Chamorros were reconciled to Spanish rule and followed the peaceful pursuits of growing tropical fruits, raising cattle and

buffaloes, and exporting copra and coconut oil. Before World War II the Chamorros on Guam numbered over 21,000, Americans and others about 1600.

Within easy range of Japanese air strikes from Saipan, Tinian, and other bases, the defensive position of Guam in December 1941 was virtually hopeless. Besides a small body of native militia, the island's defense force was a Marine garrison of 125 officers and men. Firepower consisted of nothing heavier than .30-caliber machine guns, plus the antiaircraft guns of a minesweeper, the *USS Penguin*, which happened to be in the harbor. Navy Captain George J. McMillin, governor and commander on the island, received word at 0545 on December 8 (Guam time; December 7 in the U.S.) that Pearl Harbor had been attacked and hostilities had begun. Three hours later Japanese planes from Saipan began dropping bombs on Guam and continued the attack for two days. The *Penguin* was soon sunk. On the third day, December 10, the Japanese put 5500 troops ashore, and after a few hours' resistance, the governor surrendered the island rather than incur needless civilian casualties. A month later all U.S. personnel were shipped to Japan for internment. Native Guamanians, the Chamorros, found Japanese

rule harsh even at first, and increasingly cruel and oppressive as the occupation continued.

THE WAR AND THE MARIANAS

The U.S. drive across the Central Pacific gathered momentum in the first months of 1944. The Marianas were obvious invasion targets, needed as advance naval bases and as bases for land-based bombers flying to Japan, but also for other strategic purposes. All through 1943, however, the plans called for assaults no earlier than late 1944. When Kwajalein was taken with relatively low cost, and Eniwetok and other Marshalls strongholds fell quickly, the calendar began to be revised. Raids against Truk revealed that the Japanese had evacuated most of their air and naval forces, but had moved infantry onto Truk as defense forces. The strategy of island hopping was becoming well established. Rabaul, Kavieng, and Truk were neutralized, left without air power, isolated from other Japanese forces, and bypassed. Over 30,000 powerless Japanese troops were left on Truk to sit out the war. With Australia, New Zealand, and the South Pacific secure, and with supply lines for the Central Pacific drive no longer threatened, the assaults on Saipan, Tinian, and Guam were moved up to June 1944.

The hard-fought battle for Saipan lasted from June 15 to July 9, with mop-up operations still to follow. The troops engaged were the 2d and 4th Marine divisions, reinforced after the first day by the Army 27th Infantry Division. The seizure of Tinian by the 2d and 4th Marine Divisions took eight days, between July 24 and August 1. The amtank unit operating in both the Saipan and Tinian landings was the 2d Armored Amphibian Battalion, riding in LVTA-4s

The assault on Saipan on June 15, as we have seen, was originally to have been followed by Guam landings on June 18. The postponement of the Guam landings had important consequences. The surprising strength of enemy defenses on Saipan and new intelligence gathered there indicated to the high command that resistance on Guam might be more formidable than expected. The Army 77th Infantry Division was accordingly brought from Hawaii to serve as floating reserve. Not till its availability was assured was a new date, July 21, set for the landing of troops. The time gained by the postponement enabled the Navy to deliver 13 days of the most intense preinvasion bombardment seen up to that time in the Pacific. In addition, three underwater demolition teams (UDTs) were able to work a whole week before the landing, clearing the reefs of obstacles which could have stopped landing vehicles cold. They blew up 940 barriers made of palm logs, cemented coral rock, and cable wire.

THE BATTLE PLAN

The Guam operation, code-named STEVEDORE, was carried out by Navy Task Force 53 under Rear Admiral Richard I. Conolly, who had previously been in charge of the attack force in northern Kwajalein. The landing force was the III Amphibious

Corps, commanded by Major General Roy S. Geiger, USMC. The III Amphibious Corps consisted of the 3d Marine Division and the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, with the Army 77th Infantry Division as floating reserve. Over 450 ships participated in the Guam assault.

Two separate simultaneous landings were planned for the west coast of Guam. W-Day, as it was called, was July 21, 1944, H-Hour for both was 0830. The 3d Marine Division, designated the Northern Landing Group, would land in the vicinity of Asan Village, north of Apra Harbor and Cabras Island. The 1st Provisional Brigade, as the Southern Landing Group, was to land near Agat Village south of Apra Harbor and the Orote Peninsula. Major General Alan H. Turnage commanded the 3d Division for the Asan beaches. That division comprised three assault regiments, the 3d, 9th, and 21st Marines, plus artillery and supporting units. Brigadier General Lemuel C. Shepherd commanded the 1st Provisional Brigade in its assault on the Agat beaches. The Brigade was made up of the 4th and 22d Marines, plus other units, and with the Army's 305th Regimental Combat Team (RCT) in reserve.

Once the two beachheads had been established, the next objective would be to connect them across the base of Orote Peninsula, and then secure the peninsula, Cabras Island, and Apra Harbor. The 3d Marine Division and the Army 77th Infantry Division would then proceed with the conquest of the island to the north, while the 1st Brigade would cover their southern flank and secure the southern end of the island.

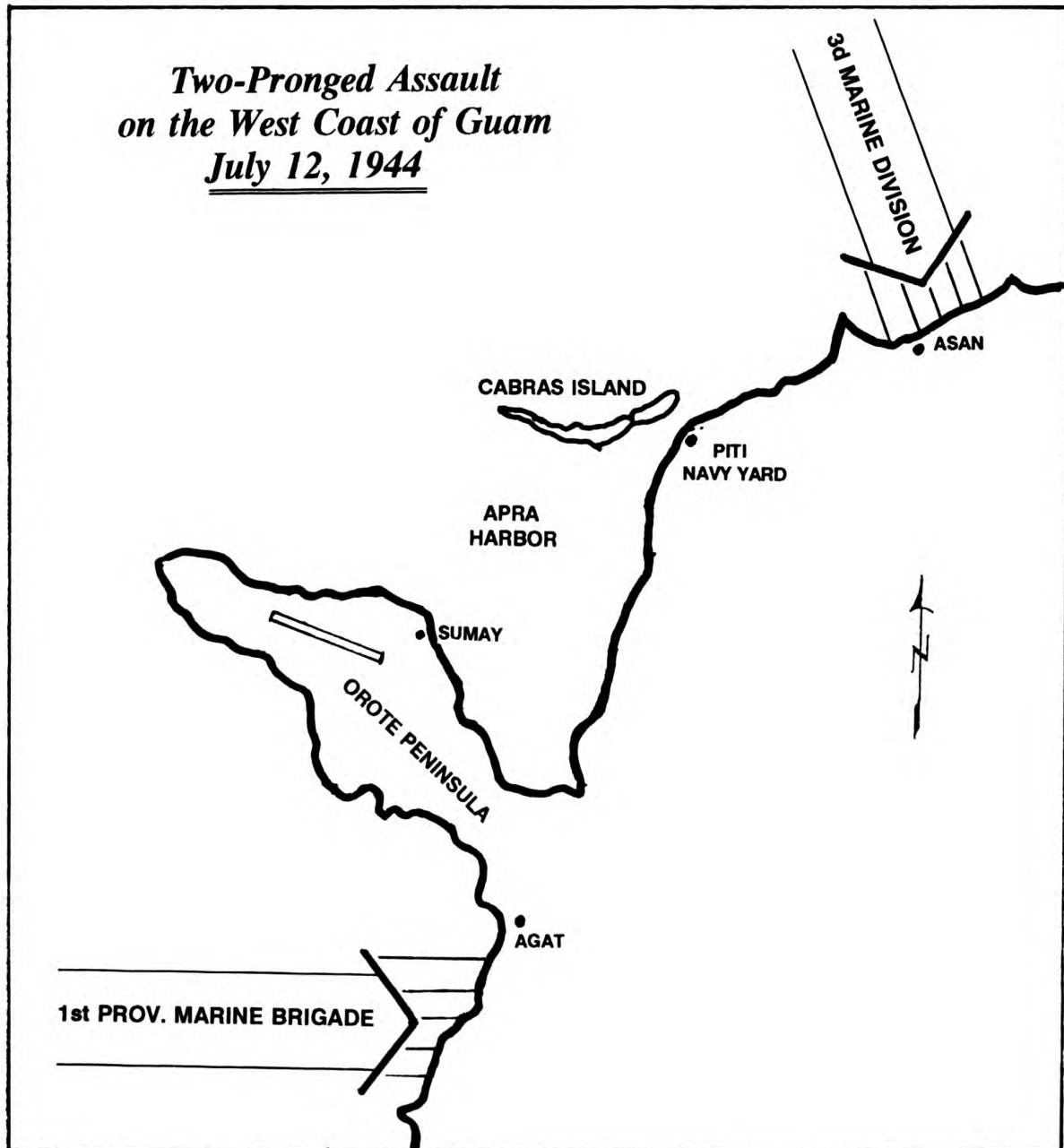
The First Armored forces were split between the Asan and Agat landings. Companies A and B, commanded by the Battalion executive officer, Captain Richard C. Warga, were to lead the Brigade across the reef to the Agat beaches. The remainder of the Battalion, essentially Companies C and D, under the direct command of the Battalion Commander, Major Louis Metzger, was assigned to lead the landing of 3d Division troops onto the Asan beaches. The primary mission of both groups was to maintain fire on enemy positions ashore until the infantry had been landed to best advantage on the beaches and, then, to support the infantry with covering fire as it moved inland. An additional assignment was to return to the edge of the reef, assist in the transfer of land tanks from LCTs onto the reef, and then lead them to shore.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

Although the United States had possessed Guam for many years, with a Marine Barracks located on Orote Peninsula, there was no information on the condition and type of reefs which lay offshore of the landing beaches. The result was that the planners for the operation were uncertain, and therefore concerned, about how the land tanks would be able to disembark from the LCMs which were to carry them to the beaches. That resulted in an additional and new mission for the First Armored Amphibian Battalion. After leading the assault to the beaches and supporting the initial operations ashore with direct fire, our companies were to return to the beach in order to meet the landing wave carrying tanks, which hit the beach some thirty minutes after the initial

landing. We were then to take cables from the LCMs and hold them secure on the reef until the tanks disembarked; then we were to lead the land tanks across the reef, full of coral heads and by then pitted with bomb and shell holes, to dry land.

To further complicate the landing, the Japanese defenders had built beach obstacles across the landing beaches consisting of wire fencing filled with rocks and timber. Rear Admiral Lawrence F. Reifsnider, commander of the Southern Amphibious



Attack Force landing the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, suggested that as the armored amphibians approached these objects, a crew member would move to the bow of the vehicle, throw a harpoon-type device into the obstacle, followed by the LVTA backing and pulling the obstacle out of the way. This crazy idea was negated when the risk to the exposed crewman and to the stopped vehicle in the assault wave, and the confusion that would ensue in the following landing waves were pointed out.

DEBARKATION

Reveille and chow times were not the same for all the LSTs. Reveille may have been at 0200, or as late as 0400, but some had not slept at all. At least some of the LSTs served steak and eggs for the troops, at an hour remembered as 0345. Debarkation through the LST bow doors and down the ramp was set for 0730.

DANIEL H. MAYNARD, Company A

In the evening of July 20, we were still about sixty miles from our objective. There was but little in the actions of the men to indicate that they were but a few hours from the fury of a major engagement. A last minute check had been held that day. Vehicles and personal weapons were in fighting shape. The evening passed as usual, with the usual number of letter writers, the ever-present crap games and poker tables, and the interminable bull sessions with their favorite topic of girls. At about 2130 the men sauntered off toward their bunks to prevent the 0400 reveille from robbing them of their much-loved sleep. Before turning in, most of the fellows went above to catch a glimpse of the naval gunfire on the horizon. The island had been under constant naval and air attack for days, and now was not the time to let up.

As usual, reveille was not late, and after completing packs and bedrolls, we all fell in for chow. After chow the men went topside to watch the sun rise and to get their first glimpse of the island of Guam. Some of the old-timers had seen it before in the line of duty, but not as they were to see it today. Navy and Marine fighters and bombers were already taking off from the flattops, and soon kept the beaches under a shadow of destruction. Battlewagons, cruisers and destroyers were lobbing tons of high explosive shells into the beaches in a quickening tempo.

The LSTs of the convoy were jockeying into positions assigned them days in advance. Destroyers were moving in dangerously close, seeking any targets that might have been missed by previous bombardments, and daring the Nips to open up with any guns which might still be in operation. The LCI(G)s (Landing craft infantry, gunboats) were maneuvering into the positions which were to mark our beaches. These little craft, mounting deadly rockets, were to lead us in, almost to the reef.

The hour of 0700 came surprisingly fast, and it was time to get down to the LST tank deck to warm up the engines, make a last minute check of equipment and to load the infantry into the amtracs. Our disembarking time was set for 0729, and on schedule the bow doors opened and the ramp dropped into position. Minutes before disembarking

kation a final message of good cheer came from the Flag. It stated that all shore installations had been knocked out, water obstacles had been removed the previous night by demolition men, and the channels were clear and marked by buoys.

On the dot each lead tank left its ship, plunging over the ramp into the water, and being followed by others in line. As the tanks moved to their positions at the line of departure, radio communications were established with Captain Owen P. Lillie, the company commander, in A-18, his command tank. The day was bright by then, the sea was light, and no signs of resistance could be noted from that point, 2000 yards offshore. The lieutenant platoon leaders had each of their tanks come on the air and "Roger" to show they were in radio contact. The company commander, Captain Lillie, quietly issued orders from his position of view, having one tank advance and another drop back a little so as to maintain the line formation.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

By 0430 hours on the 21st of July we were up and packing the final things, such as toilet articles, into our pack, and rolling and attaching blanket rolls. A hurried breakfast was gulped down, aided by hot joe. I never did have one of those steak and eggs breakfasts that I've read about being served to other troops prior to assaulting an island. Gear was stowed into the tanks, and then we went topside to see the fireworks.

At 0700 we went down into the tank deck of the LST and started the tank engines to warm them up and to make sure once again that all was in readiness. Each crew was aboard its own tank, our crew in A-10. Gas exhaust fumes were thick even though the ship's exhaust fans were running and the bow doors were open. The LSTs had been stationary in the water for almost two hours, all in their assigned positions. Orders came to disembark at 0730 hours. The tanks clattered across the deck, down the ramp, and into the sea. We were a mile or so offshore at this point. The skies were clear and the seas calm. Hastily moving away from the ramp area, the tanks moved slowly between the ships and the shore. The tanks formed into their positions as we inched toward the reef. The LSTs were now disgorging infantry-laden amtracs, and they too formed up behind us. The Navy had small guide boats moving just ahead of us to guide us towards our correct spots. Also just ahead of us were six to eight LCIs laden with rocket launchers. We were scheduled to hit the beach at 0830.

RICHARD ZENGER, Company D

On W-Day for Guam, reveille was around 0200, and chow was steak and eggs. Our tank was D-6 and the crew for the landing was George R. Smith and Lieutenant James W. Dupree in the turret, Bob (Robert M.) Lytton down below passing ammunition, Clarence R. Forbes and James E. Wylemski as machine gunners, George D. De Angelo as driver, and Carl Richard Zenger as radio operator.

CHARLES E. PERKINS, Company B

I turned 18 years of age on July 18, 1944, and three days later hit the beach with the First Armored at Guam. I don't know if it was anticipation or just being scared, but I didn't sleep at all on the night before the landing. I spent most of the night in the ship's galley helping with the eggs for breakfast.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

I saw Guam for the first time from the weather deck of LST 122. It appeared a huge mountain shrouded in the early morning mist. The morning air was filled with the heavy smell of gunpowder, identical to that at Kwajalein. I guess every Jap-held island blasted and bombarded by naval fire had the same pungent, death-like odor. In the distance our battleships and cruisers were laying down a heavy barrage, and I could see our planes dive-bombing and strafing.

On topside the Marines were all set and ready to go. I heard a Marine infantryman remark, "All I want to do is make it ashore. Once there I'll feel safe." He didn't relish the idea of riding an amphibian tractor over coral and mine-infested water, though we had been informed that demolition squads had cleaned up most of the mines and underwater obstacles. Everybody's nerves were high-strung and tense. I know mine were and, believe me, I was scared even aboard ship.

At 0730 all of our Marines were below deck with their tanks, the infantry going to the amphibian tractors to which they had been previously assigned. The tanks and tractors were warming up ready to take off at the given signal. Through the immense open bow doors of the LST, as she moved slowly into position, I caught another glimpse of Guam. I thought to myself, "This is it." I wondered how many of us would stay on this island forever. At approximately 0745 I drove our tank down the inclined ramp into the water and followed the other tanks to the line of departure.

LANDING PROCEDURES

Both landings on Guam followed the pattern which had by that time become standard. With the first light of dawn, the steady bombardment of the fleet pounded the shore, each ship working assigned targets. Carrier-based planes bombed and strafed the beaches. Amtanks and infantry-laden amtracs were in the water by 0700. For the Guam landings, on W-Day, the amtanks and LCI(G)s left the line of departure, 4000 yards from shore, at 0800. The LCIs launched a fearsome barrage of rockets until they reached the edge of the reef, as close as they could go toward the beach. The amtanks, then passing through the line of LCIs, climbed onto the reef and continued the fire assault on the beaches as they lurched across the reef. Gunfire from the big ships by then had been lifted from the beaches and moved to enemy defenses farther inland. Behind the First Armored amtanks came the first and succeeding waves of infantry, borne by LVT-2s. The landings at the Asan beaches were made at 0829, at the Agat beaches at 0832.

Although the two landings were made simultaneously, they were carried out as separate operations. Each landing had its own chain of events and provided unique experiences—and memories—for the men who were there. In the narratives below, therefore, the men of Companies A and B describe the Agat landing as they saw it. The stories of the Asan landing to the north are told, in a separate section, by C and D Company men and by the Battalion Commander.

THE AGAT LANDING

The shore near the village of Agat, where Companies A and B were to land, was divided into four target beaches, Yellow Beaches 1 and 2 to the left of Gaan Point, and White Beaches 1 and 2 to the right. Company A led the assault waves of the 22d Marines to the yellow beaches. Company B advanced ahead of the 4th Marines to the white beaches. Despite the bombardment, the enemy defenses ashore were well organized and still deadly. In the run to the beach, the 2d and 3d Platoons of Company A, moving to the yellow beaches, were the hardest hit. On all beaches tanks and tractors came under devastating fire from machine guns, mortars, and 37mm and 75mm guns. (The 75mm gun was widely, but erroneously, reported as a 77mm.) Enemy fire from Gaan Point, Bangi Point, and Yona Island did the most damage both to vehicles and personnel. It has been reported that nine First Armored tanks were knocked out in the Agat landings, and 12 troop-carrying tractors lost by the 4th Amtrac Battalion.

DANIEL H. MAYNARD, Company A

Company A was assigned the Yellow beaches, while Company B was to operate on the White beaches. Company A was divided into three platoons, the first having six tanks, the second five, and the third six. Captain Owen P. Lillie, the company commander, rode as starboard machine gunner in A-18, the command tank, on which I, as company gunnery sergeant, was the tank commander. The 1st Platoon and half of the 2d Platoon were to operate on Yellow 1, with Tank A-6 on the flank and the 2d Platoon tanks on the right. The 3d Platoon covered Yellow 2's flank, and the other half of the 2d Platoon were on their left. The command tank's position was center and about thirty yards to the rear of the entire Company to enable the company commander to have complete control.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

A little before 0800 we were lined up with the Navy guide boats and ready to hit the beach, about 5000 yards ahead. Behind us were the amtracs bearing the infantry, who would hit the beach about two or three minutes after us. On time, at 0800, we were advancing toward the beach. Driving with an open hatch, I glanced around to see perhaps a mile of tanks to my right and left flanks, churning the salt water into white

foam. Scattered throughout the line of tanks were camouflage-painted LCIs blasting away at the beach. Huge gray hulks of battleships and cruisers were laying down a heavy barrage of destruction. First could be seen the yellow-orange belching flame, and then the heavy thunderous report. Behind us the LSTs were graying in the distance, disgorging their fighting cargos. Far as the human eye could see were LVTs advancing towards the ribbon of beach. It had been raining slightly, but that cleared sufficiently to give us a crystal-blue sky above. But way off in the distance it was lightly raining. The island loomed ahead with its high towering, sparsely foliated mountains, and the beach, lined with coconut trees, was slowly coming into view. In the distance could be seen a rainbow arching majestically into the heavens. It was an overly impressive and beautiful sight. It hardly seemed possible that instant death was lurking there.

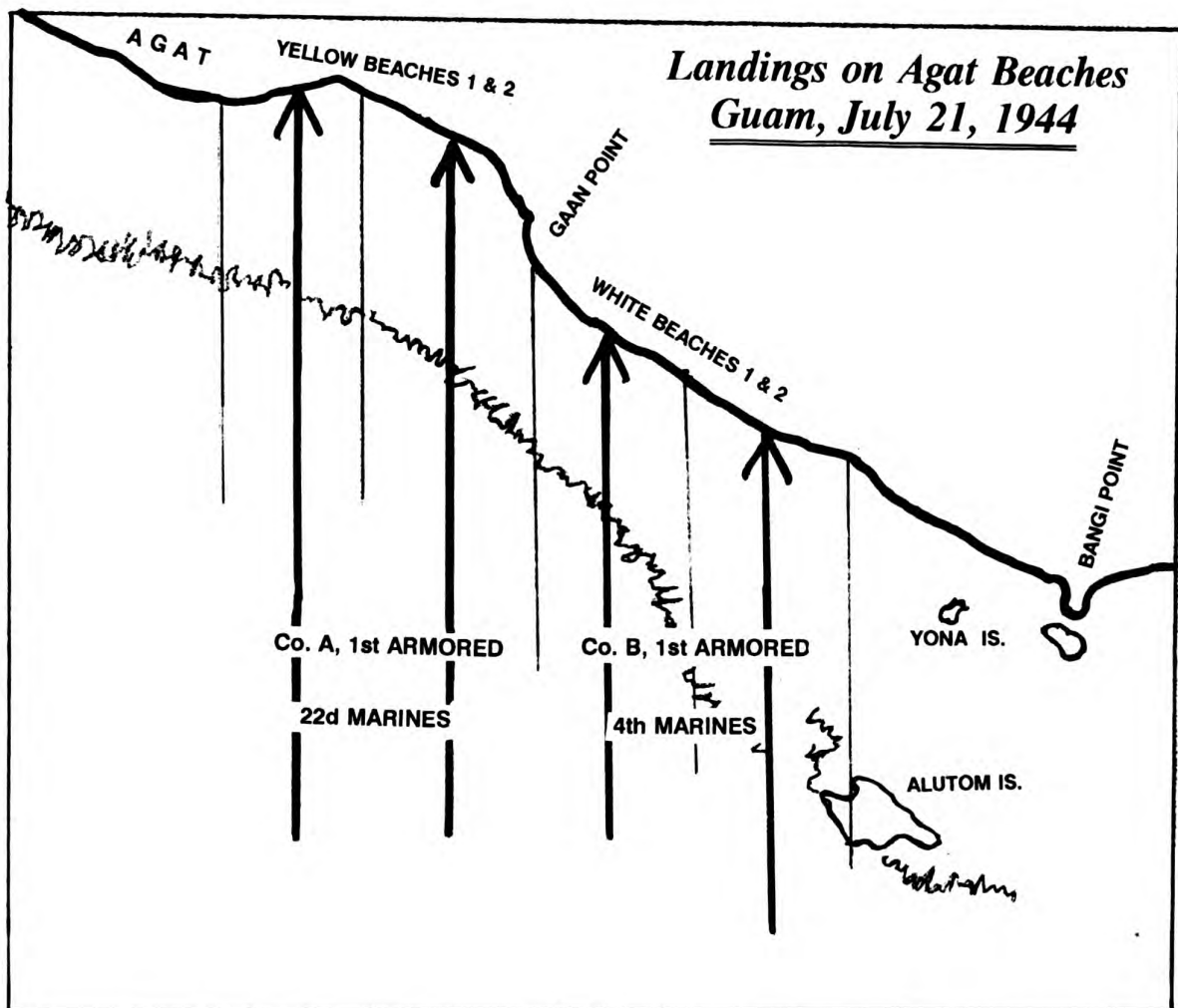
Over the intercom Paul L. Harris, the tank commander, issued the order to "button up." From here on, like all the members of our tank crew, I had a job to do. I had to keep the correct distance from the tank on either side of me and stay in line formation so we would hit the beach simultaneously. Because the guide tank was on my right, and I could observe it quite readily, I didn't have it too difficult. From about 500 yards on, our two machine gunners and 37mm gunner fired continuously at the beach. The concussion of the 37mm exploding over my head lifted the hatches an inch or so. Because I had the front hatch opened slightly to observe more clearly, gun smoke and powder blew back, stinging my face. This and the clattering of the machine guns in the rear added to the confusion.

The coral, when we reached it, 200 yards or so from the beach, made the driving a little tough. The tracks grated against hard coral as we shakily kept advancing. Lou (Luther M.) Flattum, the CP (radio operator), was helping me look for mines and a fairly decent place to hit the beach. One was located, and we headed for it.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

Moving toward the reef, the LCIs fired their rockets, which rose in sharp angles and hit the beaches. The LCIs stayed with us, firing away, until close to the reef. They then sat there, adding their fire to what we tankers now began to pour ashore. We were to fire at any targets presenting themselves and, lacking that, to fire away at the beach area anyway, in the hope of keeping the Japs' heads down. Tank A-10 hit the reef with its port track only, and that threw us sideways with a heck of a jolt. That may have saved our lives because, although I was not aware of it right then, that was when emplaced Jap 75mm and 37mm artillery pieces started blasting our tanks out of the water. Hitting the reef as we did threw us starboard, and I think that when we straightened up we were then on the starboard side of A-11.

Like most of the other men, I truthfully never saw the muzzle flashes of those guns because they were so skillfully dug into coral rock and concrete emplacements. Two such emplacements were on Gaan Point, about 100 yards or so to A-10's right. As I was the port gunner, I didn't even look over to that side of the tank. There were



numerous strongly built pillboxes along the beach. They and the guns on the north side of us did a hellish piece of work that morning. Mortar shells were exploding around us, and I could see machine gun bullets hitting the water.

Several other tanks had already been hit when I looked up in time to see A-18, which had just been hit. Someone in its starboard machine gun well had bandages out which looked like three feet of toilet paper streaming in the breeze. After we were ashore we learned that our CO, Captain Owen P. Lillie, had been acting as starboard machine gunner on A-18 and had been mortally wounded. A-18's radio operator was killed, and two men in the turret wounded. On our immediate left A-11, Lieutenant Wiley W. Loughmiller's tank, had been hit, with both its machine gunners killed and the driver, the 37mm gunner, and the ammo passer wounded. Lieutenant Loughmiller, who had been acting as tank commander on A-11, was also wounded. On A-12, the next tank to A-10's right, the radio operator and driver were both killed and the ammo passer

wounded. Both A-11 and A-12 were abandoned on the reef.

On Tank A-10 we kept moving, ignorant of all this carnage. Just before we left the water, I glanced backwards and saw tanks and tractors disabled, and some burning. Gaan Point was about sixty to seventy yards to our right. Willie (William D.) Germain, driver of A-13, said he drove across Gaan Point. I was spraying coconut treetops with machine gun fire in case snipers were up there.

ROBERT A. FISH, Company A

All night before the Guam landing we had listened to the naval bombardment and wondered if all the Japs had been killed. In the water on W-Day we waited on the line of departure, just outside the reef, for the guide boats to take us in. Company A was to land near Gaan Point. Just a few hundred yards offshore was a big sign saying, "Welcome, U.S. Marines." We wondered whether it was the UDT (underwater demolition team) or the Japs who had put the sign up. On the reef we could see artillery fire splashing around the amtracs. My tank landed 20 to 50 yards to the right of Gaan Point. I could see the Japs staring at us as we came ashore. Also we were peering into the barrel of a Jap artillery piece that had evidently been disabled by the naval bombardment. I could look over my left shoulder and see all the hostile fire hammering the oncoming tanks and amtracs.

WILLIAM D. GERMAIN, Company A

While going in we saw a sign saying, "Agat USO one thousand yards." We didn't know if the Japs or the Navy frogmen had put it there. Our platoon lucked out when we went to the right of Gaan Point, where there was a pillbox with a 77mm gun [sic] that fired to the left. It seemed that it got every tank and many, many tractors before there were enough infantry to disable it from the rear.

DANIEL H. MAYNARD, Company A

At 0800, the scheduled H-Hour, the signal flag was hoisted by the control boat, sending the Leathernecks into action once again. We were not drawing fire yet, so the turret hatches were open to permit better surveillance of the beach terrain, while the gunners were firing trial bursts, and all were alert for targets of opportunity. The LCI(G)s were advancing just ahead of us till they were about 300 yards offshore, where they lay to and commenced firing their rockets and deadly 20mm and 40mm cannons. As we passed the LCIs, we heard Captain Lillie's last radio order. His words were, "There they are, men. Let's go get 'em." Automatically turrets were closed as one, and each man settled down to do his part in the grim battle that faced him.

Now came the first sign of enemy resistance. Huge splashes from the bursts of enemy mortars were seen spraying up among the advancing tank wave. A sailor could be seen on the bow 40mm of an LCI playing water which fumed off in steam on the gun's tube. All tanks reached the reef without damage. The tankers knew that, even

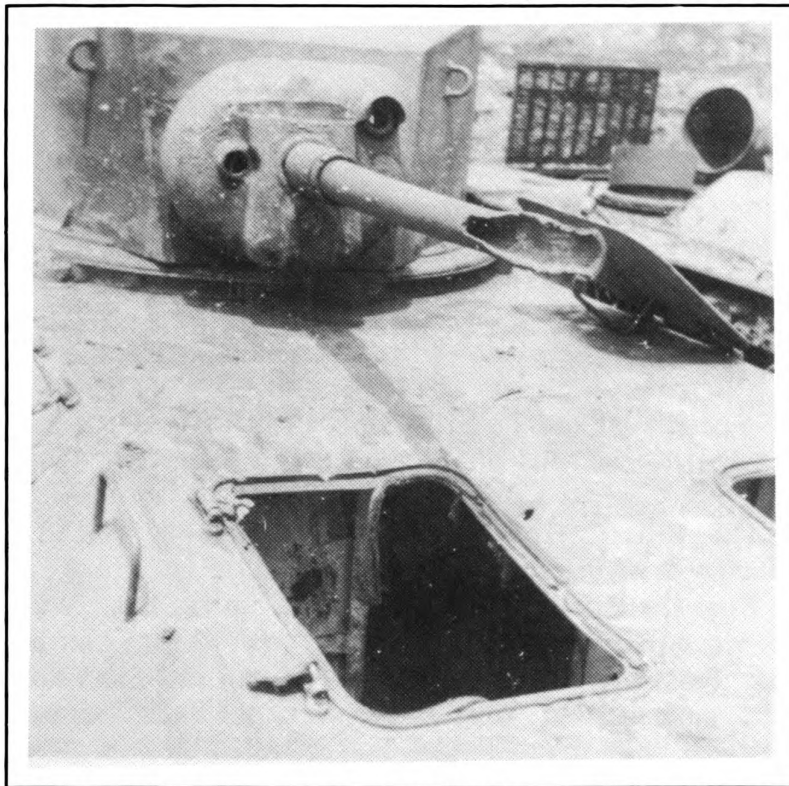
without enemy fire, the reef would give men a rough enough ride due to the coral heads spotted over the reef. We all hung on grimly to avoid being thrown about as the tank lurched onto the reef. The gunners, dripping with sweat, peered through their periscopes, tracking the beach line and squeezing off their fire when the vehicle was least violently swaying. The smell of cordite powder filled the air. Gun smoke and the filth of debris hung over the beach like a hovering cloud, hampering the visibility, always difficult through periscopes.

Tank A-11, the 2d Platoon command tank, slowed momentarily to permit another tank, out of formation in the confusion, to cross its bow. A-11 abruptly listed to port as a Jap 77mm shell [sic] tore a gaping hole amidships, turning the tank into an inferno. The machine gunners dropped dead into the hull. The hatches were blown, and the driver and radio operator quickly appeared. From the turret hatches the tank commander and the 37mm gunner emerged. The gunner, whose foot was later amputated, calmly buckled a life belt about his waist, dived into the water, and swam seaward for first aid. The tank commander—a lieutenant and the 2d Platoon leader—dragged himself from the intense heat of the turret to the bow of the tank. The driver and radio operator were both suffering from the terrific concussion of the blow, and the driver's back was riddled with shrapnel. But through their mental haze they skillfully applied a tourniquet which was later credited with saving the lieutenant's life. In the meantime the ammunition passer, recovering from the shock, crawled wounded from the hull. With the machine gunners dead, this accounted for all hands, and they took to the water on the lee side from the enemy gun. Flames were shooting skyward, fed by the tank's own ammunition and fuel. The heat was unbearable. The crew, of whom the radio operator was the only man uninjured, signaled three tractors which had delivered their infantrymen ashore and were returning seaward for the later waves. All three stopped, only to be hit in rapid succession by the same gun which was to take such a toll of our shipmates. Two amtracs were able to pull out, but the third had to be evacuated by its crew. Minutes later, every minute seeming like an hour, the wounded were picked up and taken to a hospital ship.

The company commander's tank, A-18 on which we were, saw that A-11 was out of the battle and immediately moved into the vacant position. Just then A-2, toward the left flank, received a hit just below the starboard waist gun. The starboard machine gunner was killed instantly, and the port machine gunner, ammunition passer, and the 37mm gunner were hard hit by shrapnel. All her guns except the port machine gun were knocked out. But, crippled as she was, she lumbered on to the beach, her wounded machine gunner staying at this post and spraying death in revenge.

A hundred yards from the beach A-7 was caught in bracketing fire and was soon hit on the turret. The burst set the tank afire. The tank commander and the 37mm gunner, climbing from the turret to quench the fire, saw the body of the starboard machine gunner lying on the deck. Nearby was the radio operator, wounded and burned. The two continued and, with the help of the ammunition passer, extinguished the flames with their hands. The driver attempted to start the engine, but it was found

damaged beyond repair. The tank commander gave the order to abandon tank. The ammunition passer swam for help to evacuate the radio operator. Unable to secure transportation in the immediate vicinity, he returned, bound the wounded man in a life belt, and swam him out beyond the reef, where he was able to get a boat. The tank commander, satisfied that the wounded man was evacuated, ordered his men into a wedge formation and started to advance to the beach. In waist-deep water he turned to issue orders and disappeared, victim of a direct hit from the same Jap 77mm gun. The others were momentarily stunned, but were able to continue their advance to the beach and join the infantry temporarily.



Amtank A-18, in which Capt. Owen W. Lillie and Sgt. LeRoy F. Hesse were killed and others wounded, July 21, 1944, in the Agat beach assault, Guam. (Paul)

No sooner had the command tank, A-18, pulled into line than it took a hit right on the muzzle of the 37mm gun.

The force of the explosion blew downward, killing Sergeant LeRoy F. Hesse, the radio operator. Shrapnel blowing aft killed Captain Lillie, the company commander, in his waist gun position. Even though the driver was wounded, he shifted the tank into second gear, gunned the powerful engine, and plunged forward, out of the line of fire from that disastrous gun. In the turret both the 37mm gunner and I were suffering from concussion, and I had a brush with death when shrapnel blew down the tube of the 37mm, ricocheted, and grazed my forehead. Moments later the tank weaved its way onto the beach as PFC Herbert E. Priest, the battle-weary driver, with the radio operator lying dead across his lap, drove the tank on toward the enemy until it was hopelessly enmeshed in a tank trap. The remaining machine gunner kept his gun in relentless action.

A-5 must have had a cargo of lucky horseshoes. The same enemy gun played a staccato of near hits about her as she made her way over the rough coral. She was hit only twice, however, and these hits, while blowing gaping holes in her pontoons, left the

crew uninjured and the tank as good as ever so long as she was not required to operate in water.

A-14 was not so lucky. As she advanced across the reef in low gear, a direct hit by the 77mm tore away the side of the turret, killing the tank commander and 37mm gunner. Even though the radio was demolished, the radio operator and driver were unhurt, and the tank continued its way over the reef, now strewn with the wreckage of that terrible gun. Then it received three more hits in rapid succession. Both machine gunners and the ammunition passer were seriously wounded, one machine gunner's arm being severed by a blast. Still the tank continued its advance, the less seriously wounded machine gunner still firing while the ammunition passer, even though suffering himself, applied a tourniquet and administered morphine to the armless hero. This tank too plunged on until it was on the beach and was stopped by a tank barricade, where the wounded were evacuated under enemy sniper fire. The two remaining members of the crew stood by their tank.

The deadly gun had not yet finished its work of destruction. A-12, whose position was the center of Yellow Beach 2, was about 200 yards offshore when a terrific explosion occurred on the forward starboard pontoon. The force of the blow severed the starboard track, causing the vehicle to swerve madly to the right. Immediately another hit struck in almost the same spot as the first, but just a few inches higher. The enemy's accuracy cannot be denied. The gun added two more to its list of dead. The radio operator had been killed by the first salvo, while the second had taken the driver's life. Severely wounded, lying in the wreckage, was the ammunition passer. The tank commander gave the word to abandon tank and evacuate the wounded man. As they cleared the tank, the wisdom of his command was demonstrated as a third round ground its way into the ammunition compartment, causing an explosion which demolished the already wrecked vehicle.

The remaining tanks escaped that day the wrath of that gun. A later mission, however, took a deadly toll of our shipmates.

DONALD L. FERCHAU, Company A

After the heavy fighting required to secure Saipan and Tinian, the men of Companies A and B of the First Armored, working with the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, were wary and worried as they prepared to assault the Agat beaches on Guam. Rightfully so, as it turned out. On W-Day I was agog at the destruction being wrought before the landing. When the naval big-gun bombardment ceased, the destroyers, closer in, picked up the barrage. Dive-bombers and strafers pelted the beach. Then the LCIs moved in with their rocket launchers and devastating, funny-looking explosives. When our tanks climbed onto the reef, the LCIs pulled back.

Our main worries at first were big coral formations, spray, and debris as the tanks moved toward shore. Then—WHAM!—the Japs had mortars zeroed in on the reef. All hell broke loose as A-17 moved in, on the right of the line advancing toward Agat. We were also to the right of a still very active pillbox and moving out of the cross fire that

had enveloped most of Company A. Suddenly we saw, and downed, what we thought was a Jap light tank on the beach, but it turned out to be a water buffalo.

ASHORE ON THE AGAT BEACHES

The beaches at Agat proved almost as deadly as the reefs. Japanese defenses included trenches, tank traps, land mines, pillboxes, machine gun emplacements, and sniper fire. The infantry regiments were to secure the beaches, and move inland toward



*One of the Agat beaches soon after the landing, July 21, 1944.
(Pierce)*

the higher ground. The mission of the 22d Marines included taking the village of Agat. The 4th Marines were to move toward Mt. Alifan. The devastating guns on Gaan Point and Bangi Point were soon silenced, but mortars zeroed on the beaches continued to inflict heavy loss, as did machine gun and sniper fire. Enemy resistance from prepared positions behind the beaches was fierce.

First Armored amtanks were to move inland from the beach, as much as 1200 yards, supporting the advance of the infantry until land tanks could be brought ashore. Only three tanks of Company A and eight of Company B succeeded in carrying out this assignment. Of those which had survived the devastation on the reef, some fell into trenches or tank traps ashore. Three Company B tanks were disabled by land mines. Casualties on the reef had been heavy and included the commanding officer of Company A. Much of the morning was taken in rescuing stuck tanks, tending or evacuating the wounded, and reorganizing the remnants of the two companies. All of this went on while firing back at machine gun nests and snipers. Against random mortar rounds there was little defense.

DANIEL H. MAYNARD, Company A

About 50 yards ashore, parallel to the beach, ran an unimproved road leading south from Agat, Guam's third largest town, which marked the extreme left flank. Between the road and the shore was a grove of coconut palms, and beyond it were rice paddies. These paddies, we were told, extended inland two to four hundred yards, stopping with the foothills of Mt. Alifan, which were too steep for our tanks to traverse.

Our orders covering the establishment of the beachhead were to cross the reef in

line, firing on targets of opportunity, reach the beach, and move inland until stopped by the hills. Immediately following us would be the tractor-carried first wave of infantrymen, who were to disembark a short way inland and advance behind our protective cover, even though our vehicles were not designed for land tank tactics. It was believed that the density of the coconut grove would not hinder our advance or maneuverability. Naturally no reconnaissance can predict the havoc played by furious naval gunfire and air bombardment.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM,
Company B

When we hit the beach in amtank B-2, we spotted a machine gun nest. We stopped, and while we were disposing of it, B-18 pulled right in front of us and, a few feet ahead, hit a mine. I didn't even know that had happened. Bill (William D.) Cathcart was trying to tell me about it but, because of the noise and great confusion, I couldn't make him out. Mines became a chief worry.



An amtank crew on an Agat beach soon after the landing, July 21, 1944. (Pierce)

After a short few minutes Bill shoved B-2 into first and, after two tries, knocked down a barricade. He got us to the other side of the first line of trees and stopped again. We were to wait for the planes to drop a flare to show they had stopped strafing. But when no flare came, we continued on. I was expecting any second to get a big lift into the air but—thank God—we didn't hit a mine.

After advancing approximately 1500 yards, we stopped again to wait for the infantry. But only one squad of infantry appeared. An amphibian tractor had followed in our tracks, pulled over to our left, and the Marine infantry jumped out. Our B-2 and Ralph R. McCormack's B-4 were all alone, and we didn't know what to expect next. Our machine guns were blasting away till they were red hot. The 37mm was firing steady too. My radio wasn't picking up anything and, feeling useless and wanting to do something, I jumped back into the cargo compartment. Once back there, I helped George L. Cash pass ammunition. Reese Ransom's machine gun jammed, and I tried to help him. Poor Reese was frantic. Once when he bent over to pick up a box of ammo, a bullet ripped through his back shield, grazed his back, hit the handle, and flew out. I had to laugh and tell Cash about it. When I stood up in the machine-gun well to fire, I looked back toward the beach. The infantry were still not in sight. The rest of the amphibian tanks

and tractors were catching hell on the beach. After about a half hour infantrymen began to appear on foot, and the medium tanks came in. We headed back to the beach.

DONALD C. HOUSTON, Company B

A short distance inland from the beach, my tank got stuck. We were traveling with poor visibility, and I was trying to extract a jammed shell from the 37mm gun breech. The driver missed seeing a shell hole, and the right track slid into it and got the tank stuck. We finally had to remove the shell with the rammer staff and had to get a tow to get out of the hole.

JAMES C. CHANDLER, Company B

In the Guam landing the place where we went in was so rough I had to lock my 37mm in position to keep it from being damaged. We went inland the required distance and were helping an infantry platoon that was pinned down. Then we discovered 1st Lieutenant Edgar S. Carlson's tank down in a shell hole and moved back to help him out. Corporal John H. Trapp got out of the Lieutenant's tank and hooked a tow cable to B-3, our tank. We pulled them out and went back up towards the front. The Japs were shooting at us, and at one point a shell exploded in front of us. We kept moving right under the dirt as it came down on us. I had to open my turret and wipe the dirt away from my sight. About three hours or so after the landing we went to the beach for ammo. They were just clearing the Japs from some pillboxes on the beach. That was where the Japs in pillboxes knocked out five A Company tanks.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

We came onto the beach at the place we had chosen to hit and began a steep climb. Foliage and undergrowth were dense, with trees scattered throughout. I shifted to low gear and gave it all it had. The belly of the tank pointed skyward, but it roared and kept moving slowly. Then all at once the belly dropped. The going was rough and bumpy, but soon we left the strip of undergrowth behind and came out in a clearing. We were on our own now, and everyone was a little nervous and scared. We had to avoid the shell holes, for if the tank had got into a big one, we would probably have stayed there. We advanced hurriedly to a strip of trees and undergrowth about 1000 yards inland. That was as far as the tanks were supposed to advance. Soon the tractors bearing the infantry made their appearance, and the infantry disembarked and cautiously advanced. Our machine gunners and 37mm gunner continued to fire ahead of the infantry at anything that looked like a good target. We had gained our objective, which was to support the infantry 1000 yards inland until land tanks arrived to relieve us.

Behind us the B Company command tank, with Lieutenant Edgar S. Carlson in charge, had got stuck. We pulled them out. Then we both continued toward the hills, supporting the infantry till land tanks made their appearance. We spent three hours up in the front lines. Acting upon orders we returned to the beach.

There I found out that we had been lucky. Three other tanks had hit land mines along the beach, while others had never reached the beach. A hidden Jap 77 [sic] in a pillbox accounted for about three tanks and six to eight tractors, a few of the tractors blown to hell by direct hits. Mortar fire had knocked out other tanks. Coming in, our tank had met enemy mortar and sniper fire, but I was too busy at the controls to notice how close they were to us. The rest of the crew, however, said enemy fire had been close. I found out how close when we found a sliver of shrapnel in one of the pontoons. I knew then what that Marine meant when he said he would feel safe on shore. B Company, with about 25 killed and wounded, suffered fewer casualties than A Company.

GEORGE LEGINO, Company B

As we were heading inland from the beach, drawing heavy fire from the enemy, our tank fell into a tank trap. I was ordered by Sergeant Milton L. Hansard to set up my machine gun on the ground next to the tank, which was standard procedure, while we waited for assistance to get out of the trap. To my surprise, Corporal Richard C. Duhe, radioman on our tank, was down by my side. He was ordered back in the tank, but refused to leave my side even though we were receiving heavy mortar fire. Duhe was, and is, my true foxhole buddy.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

After our tank had crossed the beach and taken cover among trees east of the beach, one of the men in the main turret shouted, "McCrory's hit!" PFC Ralph N. McCrory had been man-

ing one of the two small .30-caliber machine gun mounts behind the main turret. These positions were highly vulnerable as the gunner stood exposed from the waist up, with only his helmet, flack jacket, and the light shield over the machine gun barrel to protect him. I suspect that McCrory was most likely the victim of an enemy sniper, concealed in a tree, who waited until our amtank had passed his position (placing the sniper behind his target, with McCrory's machine gun and shield facing away) and fired down upon poor McCrory. I crawled through the opening between the driver's compartment and



Amtank crews viewing two dead Japanese defenders of an Agat beach, July 21, 1944. Marine on the left tentatively identified as Corp. Dexter S. Burnham of Company B. (Legino)

the cargo bay, where I found McCrory lying face down on the stacked 37mm ammunition. I removed his first-aid kit from his web belt and began to look for his wounds. A small circular hole near the top of his steel helmet prompted me to unfasten and remove the helmet from McCrory's head. With the helmet came a large part of McCrory's skull and brain. I covered him with a poncho and told the other machine gunner and the tank commander that McCrory was dead. They expressed disbelief, but they hadn't yet seen his wounds. Fifty years has not been long enough for me to forget the horror of my first close contact with massive human trauma, the day McCrory got it.

Because an amtank's radio could be operated remotely from any position in the vehicle, the radio operator was usually the crew member most available to replace another who had become disabled. I had trained for all these other positions. Nevertheless, it was with grave misgivings that I donned my own steel helmet, stood up in McCrory's mount, and checked the status of his .30-caliber machine gun. It was locked and loaded, and off "safe." I accidentally discharged a short burst into the nearby treetops as I nervously scanned for the source of the fire that had hit McCrory. All this went unnoticed in the heat of the battle that was raging on all sides of the vehicle. Visibility from McCrory's turret was a vast improvement over that from the radio operator's position. Amtanks and other vehicles were ablaze to my right, left and rear. On the beach and in the surf were disabled landing craft and vehicles and numerous dead and wounded Marines. Enemy mortar and artillery rounds continued to fall on and near our positions and in the surf and on the beaches.

My tank commander called for medical aid for McCrory, and a U.S. Navy physician came aboard our tank and examined him briefly. The doctor confirmed my "diagnosis" that McCrory had died instantly from massive head injuries inflicted by an enemy bullet. The tank crew assisted a detail of Marines in removing the body from the vehicle. The battle continued through the day and into the night.

WILLIAM F. COWGILL, Company B

I was a machine gunner on Tank B-5. Thanks to the Navy, we ended up on the wrong beach. We promptly fell into a bomb crater and were stuck. Jim (James C.) Gamble, our ammunition passer, left the tank and was proudly smoking a cigarette as the first wave of infantry passed through us. Jim looked like an ad for Lucky Strike cigarettes, completely unconcerned with the assault and the possibility of Japanese in front of us.

DANIEL H. MAYNARD, Company A

As we pulled onto the beach I didn't yet know the full extent of the casualties on Captain Owen P. Lillie's command tank, A-18. We proceeded inland about 100 yards, where we were finally stopped by a tree stump which had been cut down by naval gunfire. Here the tank stalled. I crawled through the bottom of the turret and saw my

ammo passer giving first aid to Captain Lillie, who was hit in the chest. I administered morphine, but he died a few minutes later. Looking forward to the driver's compartment, I saw that Sergeant LeRoy F. Hesse, the radio operator, was also dead and the radio demolished. Hesse had been killed instantly. My driver had also been hit by shrapnel.

I then told the remaining members of my crew that I would get out and attempt to set up a machine gun and they should pass it out to me. As I started out, a box of ammo was shot from my hand by a Jap sniper. PFC John H. Wilson then passed a machine gun and a box of ammo to me, and I set up under the tank. The rest of the crew then joined me there. First aid was given to PFC Herbert E. Priest and me. I then told PFC Clayton L. Wolf to take charge and that I would go to a nearby tank and attempt to get a radio message to Lieutenant Thomas J. Garfield, who was Company A's second in command.

Close to our position at A-18, I saw A-8 and told the tank commander to try to get through by radio to Lieutenant Garfield and inform him of our status, of the CO's death, and that he was now in command. I then proceeded to Tank A-10, which was about fifty yards away to the right. As their radio was out of order, I gave orders to the tank commander to set up a machine gun defense to his front. Going down the beach I saw Platoon Sergeant Charles L. Nalevanko, who informed me that his tank had been hit by gunfire while crossing the reef, killing two of his men and wounding two others. I explained the situation to him and said I would try to contact his platoon leader or Lieutenant Garfield and inform them of his status. I told Platoon Sergeant Nalevanko to reorganize the best he could in the meantime. Going on down the beach about 200 yards I ran into a lieutenant colonel in charge of a battalion command post. When I explained the situation to him, he agreed to try to get my message through. At this time a Jap sniper in a tree about thirty yards away fired at us, and the bullet struck me in the hand. A corpsman in a nearby foxhole gave me first aid, and I again started back down the beach in order to try to reorganize the company.

Toward the left flank I ran into Lieutenant Ellis M. Livingston, who was having trouble getting inland due to tank traps and rough terrain. I told him an enemy field piece was still in action and that he was in the line of fire. He then managed to get inland off the Beach. Then Lieutenant Livingston, Platoon Sergeant John W. Spelce, and I tried to reorganize the 2d Platoon as their platoon leader was a casualty. After this I reported to Lieutenant Garfield for further orders. He ordered me to contact all A Company tanks and have them report to the assembly area. I carried out his orders to the best of my ability and reported to the assembly area.

As I contacted the tank crews, I learned what each had been doing. Those tanks that had negotiated the infernal reef carried on inshore to the accomplishment of their mission. The others, unmaneuverable or out of action, were immediately checked and work started to set them free. Those which were caught in barriers were soon surrounded by a portion of their crews, determined to defend them. While tank comman-

ders and machine gunners kept the watch, the other tankers worked to free the trapped vehicles. On those tanks that were damaged, the crews first saw that the wounded were cared for, then went to work to make their weapons serviceable. Members of the crews of demolished tanks joined others to help in the work and defense. Through all this time the Japanese were drumming out a continual barrage of mortar fire, interspersed with the sharp stuttering of Nambu machine guns. Nip snipers, hidden like obnoxious jungle insects, were still shooting from cover. Every man had to be sure his back was not exposed to them.

As soon as our orders permitted, a group of us determined to destroy the gun that had taken the lives of so many of our buddies. We found, however, that demolition land tanks, coming in later waves, with their heavier armor and more powerful guns, had beaten us to the job. We at least had the satisfaction later of going to the cave where the gun was concealed. Credit must be given the Nips for the camouflage and construction of the pillboxes in the coral cliff. It was impossible to see until one was right on it, and it was cleverly defended by lighter weapons. If it had been manned by Marines, it would have given tenfold the damage wrought by the Japs. Even so, they had accounted for seven of our tanks hit, three of which were completely demolished. We had lost eleven killed and seventeen wounded. The amtracs suffered even more. They lost eight vehicles, fortunately after most of them had discharged their infantry cargo. This was mainly because our tanks had preceded them and had drawn the enemy fire. One incident cannot be erased from my mind. One tractor with its full complement of infantrymen was hit, and all were lost.

ROBERT A. FISH, Company A

We had made it inland about 50 yards from the beach, when the LVTA got stuck in a shell or bomb crater. We could not see anything directly to our front, but off to the right and behind us, Gaan Point was lighting up like a Christmas tree. The Japs were putting up tremendous resistance from this strong point. We could see some of the Japs standing on top of Gaan Point, firing their weapons at the oncoming amtracs. Gunnery Sergeant Dan (Daniel H.) Maynard set up a light machine gun on the beach and began firing. In the heat of action he swallowed a mouthful of Beechnut chewing tobacco. This action probably lasted 15 minutes, but seemed much longer. I asked Private John L. Witherspoon, my runner, to make contact with the tanks on our right. He came back running and ducked behind a palm tree. A Jap had thrown a hand grenade at him. "Hell, Lieutenant, that area is full of Jap soldiers!" Later Gunnery Sergeant Dan Maynard and I saw Captain Owen P. Lillie on the beach. It looked like he had been shot in the stomach. This was a deadly encounter. Several Marines in my platoon were killed in this action.

Corporal William M. Mulligan came back to the platoon about two hours after the landing, smoking a cigar and carrying a canteen hanging from the tendons of his arm. He had lost one of his hands in the landing, but was reporting for duty. More guts than a slaughter-house hog!

DONALD L. FERCHAU, Company A

Once on the beach, not knowing what was going on elsewhere along the line, we proceeded inland and plopped smack-dab into a tank trap carved to precise dimensions for our tank. There we sat at a halt, unable to move in any direction due to lack of traction. Even small pieces of timber we found did not give us traction enough to move out. There was nothing to do but deploy outside the tank and wait for orders. Meanwhile, the 4th amtracs had emptied their loads of infantry, who moved up beyond us. Lots of mortar and heavy gunfire from the Japs was erupting on and along the reef to our rear. I smoked a cigarette to calm my nerves. Then, with my carbine, I shot down a coconut I thought looked like a Japanese helmet up in a palm. We had been taught that Japs had a habit of securing themselves in trees to act as snipers.

Meanwhile, couriers were scurrying about trying to determine casualties, condition, etc. "Buddy" (Bernard M.) Rich came along soon, breathless, blanched, and limping. Indicating his pocket with his right hand, he said something had hit him right there. He reached into his right pocket and pulled out a Daisy can opener and a mutilated 50-cent piece. A bullet had struck these items, and they had probably saved his leg.

The seventh wave came in. Medium tanks moved in and through. We stayed trapped a very long time.

WILLIAM D. GERMAIN, Company A

Our tank got stuck in a tank ditch, but that was lucky. A headquarters tank went in on our right, and a Jap machine gun killed the tank's machine gunner. I don't know how much damage was done to that tank before someone got that gun. Later we were pulled out of the trap.

ROBERT W. PIERCE, Company A

The Guam landing will remain in my memory forever. Our tank was the only survivor in our platoon. Three of four tanks were hit by Japanese 77mm shells [sic] while on the reef approaching the beach at Agat. The fourth got ashore and was inland less than 50 yards when it was hit by a mortar shell. Our tank bellied up against a hillside. It was operable, but we were ordered to get out of it rather than risk being hit by mortar or sniper fire. Before abandoning tank I listened to Banks B. Pennington reporting to the command tank and knew that A Company had suffered severe losses. Later that day we moved to a bivouac area near Agat. We dug foxholes and, as we were digging, George T. Bell, a CP who was the radio operator in our platoon command tank, approached. George's tank had been hit on the reef. Lieutenant Wiley A. Loughmiller, the platoon leader, had been severely injured. George, who had not been hurt, helped the Lieutenant and others to an emergency craft. He was rejoining us when I recognized him and said, "My God, George, I thought you were dead!" "Thanks a lot," he replied.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

Just as we left the beach and entered the jungle, I was jolted almost out of the tank. I don't know if we hit a downed coconut tree log or if it was a mortar explosion. I hit my left thumb somewhere on the machine gun and cut it wide open. We continued inland, shooting and looking. We crossed a narrow dirt road which ran parallel to the beach and, after about 20 yards, the rear end of A-10's port track dropped into a tank trap, or a slit trench for infantry. We couldn't go forward or back. The 37mm gun was pointed up into the air facing inland, and the front of the tank was just about nosed into a very steep hill, twenty feet high and covered with brush. I looked around and could not see any other tanks or, worse yet, any Marines. Hastily checking, we found everyone was okay and quickly decided that we couldn't sit there in an out-of-action tank. I told everyone to come back to my gunner's well and I'd cover them as they abandoned tank. Earl L. Gray didn't have a good view from his gun well as his side of the tank was canted up quite a bit. The crew quickly exited the tank and jumped down into another slit trench nearby. I grabbed my carbine and slung it over my shoulder, took out my knife and cut the belt of machine gun ammo so that I had forty rounds remaining in the belt (still loaded in the gun), and grabbed a full box of ammo, which I pitched over the side to the ground below. Cradling the machine gun in my arms, I jumped down from the tank. I had my finger on the trigger, and when I hit the ground, the shock of it caused me to squeeze the trigger. Five or six rounds hit right in front of the slit trench containing my buddies. I was mortified, but this was no time to make explanations. As mortars and bullets were dropping and zipping, they thought it was Jap machine gun fire. I never had the guts, until one of our reunions, to tell Bob (Robert W.) Pierce and Bill (William J.) Carroll the truth. I'm not sure yet if they believe me, or even if they remember the event.

Dan (Daniel E.) Montgomery carried boxes of ammo for me as we both crawled to the top of that steep hill, where I set up my machine gun. We still couldn't see any Marines or vehicles anywhere. I wasn't sure that anyone else had even got ashore. About that time two large mortar rounds exploded a few feet away, and it rolled Dan and me halfway down the hill. We crawled back up and got behind the gun again. About that time Dan said he'd been hit in the arm. Also, I had been just nicked in the hand by a ricochet. I got his first aid kit off of his belt, but then we couldn't find any blood. It must have been a spent round that hit him in the crook of the arm. I saw movement behind us, running to the north in the jungle, and recognized Private Frank Harris, one of the Papago Indian boys I had taken machine gun training with. I yelled out, "Chief," a common, not disrespectful, name for Indians at that time. He looked my way, couldn't see me, and kept on going. By this time it seemed like a half hour since we hit the beach. Later in the day, we found out that A-2, A-5, A-7, A-11, A-12, A-14, and A-18 had all been hit. While Montgomery and I had the machine gun on the crest of the hill, we heard a Jap tank between us and Agat for a couple of minutes. We were later told a Marine stopped it with a bazooka.

I never did see many infantry that morning. At about 0930 to 1000 hours, two

other men, probably Bob Pierce and Earl L. Gray, and I explored to our north a hundred yards or so along the dirt road. We wanted to see what was happening. We soon came across an infantryman lying in the road. He had been shot just a few minutes before and told us to watch out. He thought the shot had come from in front of him and to the right. That would have been the northern edge of the steep hill that I had my machine gun on earlier. The Marine had been shot in the upper leg, the bullet also going through the stock of his rifle. Did he want a shot of morphine? He said no, just to hand him his rifle. We went looking for the sniper, but couldn't spot him. On the reverse side of the hill, we found a small storage room dug into the hill and full of bags of rice. The bags were smoldering, and we assumed the infantry had heaved grenades in, although we still didn't see any of the 22d Marines in front of us.

About 1100 to 1200 hours some other 1st Armored men joined us near our tank. They had brought some of our dead with them, including Captain Lillie. One of the men gathered there was our corpsman, a petty officer whose name I long ago forgot. The sniper and mortar fire in our area had now ceased, and we could talk. One of the stories related was told me by Bill (William L.) Aydelotte of A Company. He said that when his tank got ashore, he also had set up his machine gun. He saw six or seven men run out of a cave and into the jungle. He had plenty of time to fire, he said, but was so surprised that he just looked at them before he realized they were Japs. In frustration he said that he then turned his gun onto a water buffalo grazing nearby and shot it dead.

At about 1300 our remaining tanks, including A-10, went down the road to the south and put up defensive positions a few hundred yards inland from the beach. Towards evening, bodies of three of our buddies were brought to us by someone in Company A. I helped to wrap them in their blankets and ponchos, and we buried them there. I believe PFC Dean R. Petersen was one of these, but I can't remember the others. This was a temporary burial spot, where the beach hit higher ground, just over a bank.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

After being released from infantry support inland, we returned in B-2 to the beach. We climbed into the tracks left by the medium tanks; it seemed a safer way to travel. A lot of Marines had fallen on the beach. Corpsmen were working feverishly, giving plasma, etc. We stopped just before the first line of trees again. I was back on the radio trying to pick up the rest of our platoon. But when I stood up to check the antenna I discovered the damned thing had been shot off. I heard someone yelling my name along with a few expletives. It was Thomas A. Timmons in B-1 shouting for me to get back on the air. I installed a new antenna, and he blew me a kiss. All tanks in the Platoon save Paul L. Harris's B-3 and Lieutenant Edgar S. Carlson's B-16 were back on the beach. We finally reached them on the radio, and they said they were with some pinned-down infantry and were helping to get them out.

The rest of the day was spent transporting wounded out to the ships and carrying

ammo and water to the front lines. On the first trip to the lines we ran into another mine field. B-1 and we in B-2 were in the lead. George L. Cash was driving. We hit a mine and for a few seconds I thought I was dead. All it did, however, was blow a hole in the bottom of the tank and send us into a near panic. A medium tank just ahead hit a larger mine and lost a track. Mines were getting as thick as fleas. Pedro Ruiz grabbed his Thompson submachine gun and walked in front of the tank as we advanced. I felt quite a bit of admiration for Pedro then. Thank God he didn't get hit, but they were coming terribly close. We caught up with the infantry, and some of the men helped Pedro look for mines and guide us.

When we finally returned to the beach, it was about 1700. We proceeded to the bivouac area and dug in. Command posts and emergency hospitals began to spring up in the tangled and uprooted beach area. Tanks and bulldozers had worked their way over the reef and were busy scooping trails. Supplies were pouring in. The Japs had fled to the hills except for a few scattered snipers underground, who would take an occasional crack at us, killing or wounding a few until they were flushed out. Looking up you could see lines of Marines crawling under fire along the ridges, heading for the caves and holes of the enemy.

We could rest, at least for the time being, and eat C and K rations. Ever since we had returned to the beach the first time I had felt sick because of the dead bodies sprawled all over the beach and coral. It wasn't just because there were bodies, but because they were Marines. I believe I saw a total of only three dead Japs that day. I remember vividly a fallen Marine lying on the beach in the tracks of a tank or tractor, the mark of a grouser across his forehead and his guts lying all around him. Many of the tanks and tractors had received direct hits from a Jap 75mm [sic] dug in and hidden right on the beach. That one gun killed a lot of Marines. Thank God its field of fire was a little to the right and did not include our beach.

Late in the afternoon the Army came in loaded down. They appeared old men, with an average age of around thirty.

FIRST NIGHT ON THE AGAT BEACHES

The 4th and 22d Marines on W-Day cleared the beaches from north of Agat to south of Bangi Point and pushed the enemy inland to the lower slopes of Mt. Alifan. Resistance, however, had been fierce, and in the night the enemy counterattacked at several points on the beachhead perimeter. At least four shouting, noisy, charges were made, using tanks and assorted firearms. Some threw small land mines as though they were grenades. Only a few small groups or individuals broke through the perimeter to shoot or bayonet Marines in their foxholes. It was a restless night. The First Armored units, except for four tanks assigned to beach defense, had bivouacked in a rice paddy south of Gaan Point. While this was going on, the Army 305th Regimental Combat Team, which had started coming ashore in the afternoon, had to work all night under very difficult circumstances to complete the landing of its troops.

DONALD L. FERCHAU, Company A

The first night ashore on Guam was hellacious. The Japs were formidable and tenacious, and forced us into foxholes, our first underground living quarters.

WILLIAM D. GERMAIN, Company A

That night we set up as beach defense. The Japs counterattacked, and bullets were ricocheting off the tank all night, but we suffered no more casualties.

CHARLES E. PERKINS, Company B

In the evening of W-Day the Army started unloading 10-in-1 rations, a luxury never issued to us. Someone asked the guard for a case of rations, but he said they would need a note or permission from Major So-and-so. Boy, a lot of notes to okay it showed up. That way we got bacon, coffee, and fruit. The pontoons in our tanks became minor storage compartments.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

Prior to darkness, Daniel E. Montgomery and I dug a double foxhole a couple of hundred feet inland from the tanks. The company was establishing a backup line there for the infantry, who were about one-third mile inland in the foothills of Mt. Alifan, to our east. We again set up a machine gun and were well prepared for the night but, needless to say, we had little sleep that night. Spasmodic firing went on, and flares went up once in a while. After about 0200 we started hearing shouting and noise up on the hill. We could hear bottles clanking (I swear it) and bamboo sticks being hit together. The noise increased, a bugle sounded, and suddenly shooting broke out in a hell of a din up there. Tracers were going in all directions, and explosions were everywhere. We got prepared for anything, as it was a banzai attack that was occurring. Flares kept it lit up. Our foxhole was in a field that had grass about three feet high, with no shrubs or trees. About ten minutes after all hell had broken loose above us, we could see someone running toward us. As we didn't know friend from foe at that point, Montgomery jumped up with a bayonet on the end of his M-1 and challenged the figure just as he got to our hole. It was a Marine, who said the Japs had broken through. He was wounded fairly badly and wanted to know where the aid station was. We told him we didn't know, but it would be behind us somewhere down by the beach. He jumped up again and took off for the beach. Some Japs slipped by us, but we didn't see them. The noise died down until dawn. Next morning, as we were heating coffee and our ration cans of "eggs," some firing opened up amongst us. A Japanese Nambu was one of the guns firing. It was the Japs who had slipped through us in the night. They were soon dispatched, and none of our group was hit.

THE ASAN LANDING

The Asan landing zone, named for the village of Asan, was divided into four landing beaches, Red 1 and 2, Green, and Blue. Company D and the 3d Marines were assigned to the two Red Beaches. Company C would lead the 21st Marines to Green Beach and the 9th Marines to Blue Beach. For the landing, the deadliest Japanese defenses were the mortars and 75mm guns on Adelup Point to the left of the target beaches and Asan Point to the right. The 1st and 2d Platoons of Company C and the 2d and 3d Platoons of Company D hit their beaches on schedule, each tank moving inland as far as the terrain permitted in support of the infantry. The 3d Platoon of Company C stayed waterborne to fire on Asan Point, the 1st Platoon of Company D to fire on Adelup Point. At 0915 D Company's 1st Platoon drew fire from the gun on Adelup Point and lost three tanks, with five men killed and seven wounded. The 3d Amtrac Battalion fared even worse, losing 30 tractors, some of them loaded with infantry.

LOUIS METZGER, *Battalion Commander*

At H-Hour, 0800, right on schedule, on a signal from the control vessels, the armored amphibians, guided by Navy wave guides, commenced moving down the "boat lanes." The attack on Guam had commenced. During the run to the beach the intensity of Naval gun fire and aerial bombardment increased. As the smoke and dust of battle drifted off shore, visibility from the low-riding LVTAs was very poor. As we churned to the beach, from the turret of my command vehicle I could see only the armored amphibians close to me. Finally, through the dust and smoke, we could see the beach and Asan Point. At that time there was minimal enemy fire falling on the beach, but an automatic weapon (probably a Nambu machine gun) opened fire on us from Asan Point. We fired back and the enemy fire ceased.

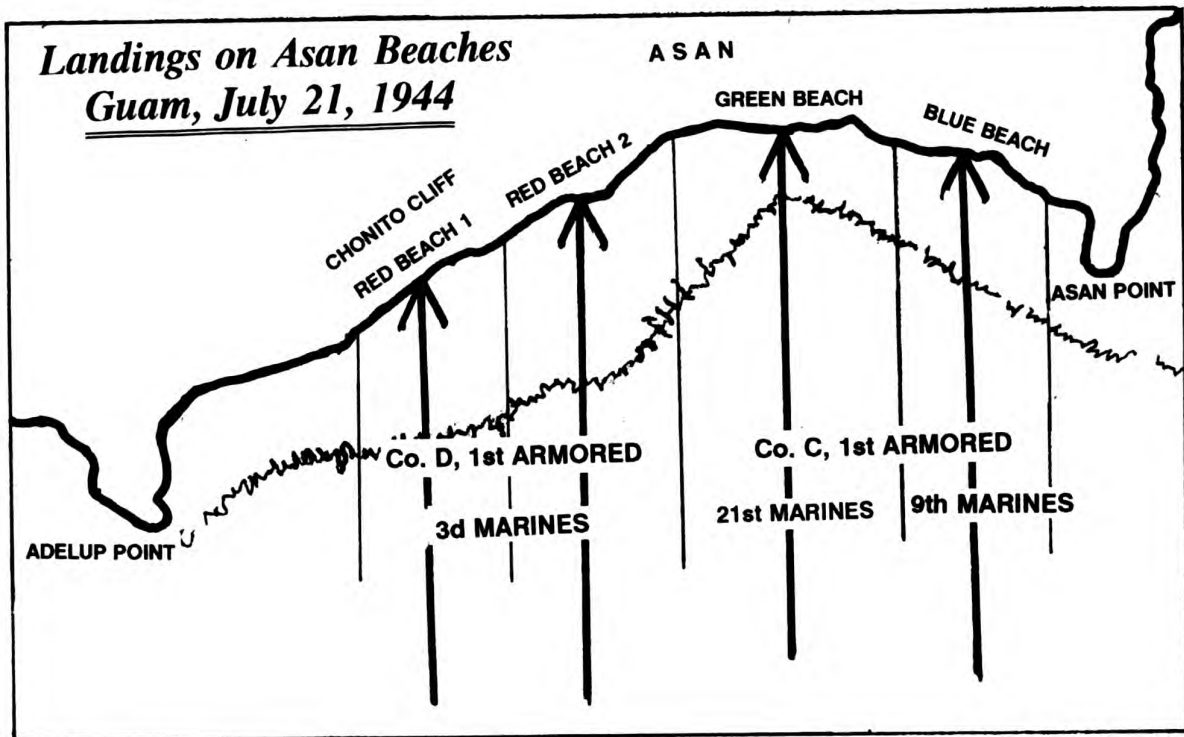
In order to provide assistance to any LVTa hit by enemy fire, or incapacitated for any reason, our twelve Battalion LVT(2)s were loaded with mechanics, spare parts, and medical personnel; they followed the attacking armored amphibians, but set off to the flank.

ROBERT C. BLAEMIRE, *Company C*

The first day on Guam was the scariest because we had to assault Asan Point. Lieutenant Harold D. Holder had become our tank commander on C-13, replacing Corporal Homer H. Edwards, who had been wounded and evacuated at Kwajalein. We led the assault as the zero wave and kept our fire on Asan Point until the infantry came.

GEORGE F. ROBERTS, *Company D*

At Guam we were to land between Asan Point and Adelup Point, and were almost in when the F6Fs came in on their strafing runs. The pilot over us must have



been as nervous as we were because I could see his .50-caliber rounds hitting the water behind us and come stitching up alongside us and on up the beach. Nevertheless, we were always glad to see planes overhead as long as they were ours, and particularly if they were Marine pilots.

HOWARD VAN KESSEL, Company D

Leaving the LST our tank crew included tank commander, Corporal Rudolph Stephens; gunner, Corporal Howard W. Van Kessel; driver, Corporal Richard J. Vandello; radio operator, Corporal Bob (Robert B.) Wilson; and ammunition passer, Private Jim B. Thornberry. D-16 was Lieutenant Robert E. McDowell's command tank, with radios tuned for both Company and Battalion.

As we came onto the coral reef, we began receiving cannon fire from enemy 77mm guns [sic] on Adelup Point, a cliff about 300 feet high on the extreme left flank of the invasion landing. We directed our attention to finding the source of this fire, but the big gun emplacements were so well camouflaged, it was difficult to locate them. While Tanks D-2, D-3 and D-5 were being hit, D-16 was moving back and forth, side to side, firing our cannon and machine guns every 15 seconds or so, each time the tank stopped to change direction. About that time a shell hit the water just in front of D-16, sending a spray of water over the tank. Water trickled down over the gunner's periscope sights, making it impossible to see anything through the periscope. As the tank stopped,

the voices on the intercom were yelling, "Get the shell off." "Move out," I said, "I can't see through the periscope." By the next stop I was able to register the shells where I thought the cannon was located. At the same time the other tank still in operation was retaliating in the same way. It was minutes later that the enemy fire stopped. We then both picked up the survivors and took them to the nearest Navy ships for treatment.

JOHN F. KELLY, Company D

When we landed in Guam on July 21, I was in the ill-fated Tank D-3, with Sergeant George H. Thomas as tank commander, Wayne J. King the 37mm gunner, Lester W. Hanson the driver, Howard H. Zitnik the CP, and George W. Lybarger the ammo



Wreck of Amtank D-2, in which Sgt. Nickolas A. Manfred and PFC George P. Christopoulos were killed and two others wounded, in the Asan landing, July 21, 1944. (Paul)

passer. Cletus M. Gilleland and I were the machine gunners. For some unexplained reason Sergeant Thomas asked me to take his place in the turret, and shortly after that, our tank was struck by a Jap artillery piece. D-3's track was broken, and we were helpless in the water, sitting on the coral. I don't know to this day who besides Gilleland and me got out of that tank. [King, Lybarger, and Zitnik died in D-3; Hanson and Thomas were injured, evacuated, and not returned to the First Armored; Kelly was injured but eventually returned; Gilleland was injured, but continued on

duty.] I was picked up by one of our tanks and taken to a destroyer, where I was patched up. I then went topside to talk to the skipper at his request. He wanted to know if I was one of the people who had come from that tank. I said yes and pointed out the broken track and said the tank hadn't moved. He took a pair of binoculars and saw the emplacement for the gun that had struck our tank. He promptly fired his guns on the emplacement and destroyed the gun. I was transferred to the hospital ship, *USS Solace*, and sent first to the Marshall Islands, then to a Naval base on New Caledonia.

ASHORE ON THE ASAN BEACHES

The immediate objective of all three 3d Marine Division regiments was to secure the high ground behind the beaches. Adelup Point and Asan Point were soon secured. High ground behind the Red Beaches included Chonito Cliff and Bundschu Ridge, which proved to be costly assignments for the 3d Marines. The 21st and 9th Marines on the right were able to extend the beachhead much farther inland the first day than the 3d Marines to the left. As at Agat, the First Armored amtanks were to support the infantry inland until land tanks could be brought into action. Here again tank traps, trenches, and also mortar and artillery fire prevented or delayed some tanks from carrying out this mission. The maintenance tractors committed to rescuing both tanks and men were kept busy pulling tanks out of traps. Two Company C tanks were disabled by land mines.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

We hit the beach at 0830 under heavy mortar and artillery fire. We were kept busy firing ashore, ahead of advancing troops and at Adelup Point.



Assessing the damage to a Company C amtank after the Asan landing, July 21, 1944. (Paul)

C. L. WHITLOCK, Company D

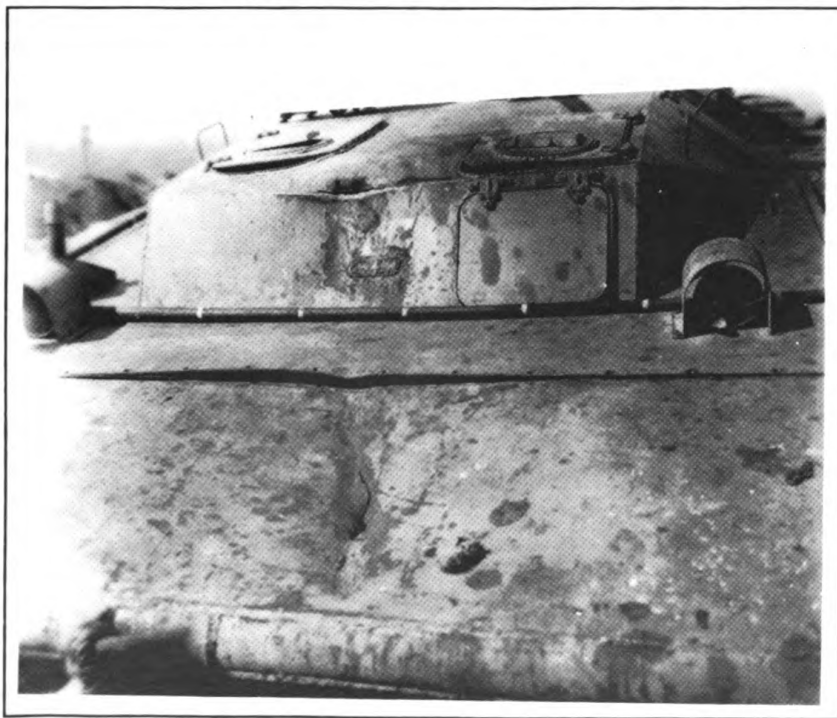
We landed by Adelup Point. D-10 got hung up on a coconut tree stump. Being the machine gunner in the rear of the tank, I had to get out of the tank and connect D-10 to another tank to pull us off the stump. We were under heavy Japanese fire from Adelup Point. On the reef to our left were D-2, D-3 and D-5, knocked out by Jap 77mm guns [sic]. Crewmen from D-2 and D-5 were retrieved, but D-3 burned all day with three bodies in it (Wayne J. King, Howard H. Zitnick, and George W. Lybarger), which it was impossible to get out. By afternoon the reef was strewn with all types of amphibs, bodies, trash, etc.

WILLIAM MOIR, Company D

We hit the beach on W-Day at 0829, with the first wave of infantry only a minute behind us. Our tank, D-14, was caught in a tank trap just yards onto the beach. The trap was a big hole, apparently dug by a bulldozer, with logs facing the water in such a way they couldn't be mounted. We spent a good deal of time running around trying to find other logs to put under our tracks to get traction and get off. The Japs were laying down a heavy mortar barrage on the beach, and one lone machine gunner kept opening up, but if he was aiming at us, he wasn't doing any damage. Maybe they didn't bother us because we were apparently disabled. Quite a few tractors were hit and blown sky high. We waited maybe an hour and a half before a maintenance tractor came and pulled us out.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

When my tank, D-11, hit the beach on W-Day, we got stuck in a shell hole, a large crater in the soft sand. D-11 slid into the hole sideways, and try as he might, the driver could not get the tank out of that hole. Lieutenant (Milton B.) Curtis, the 3d



Company C amtank
after being hit by mortar fire
in the Asan landing,
July 21, 1944. (Paul)

Platoon leader, transferred to another tank. We were sitting ducks there, and decided to abandon the tank. This we did, and I found another crater to crawl into, where I tried to get my bearings as to what was going on. I was in the hole for a minute or two when a couple of Marines, I assume from the second wave, joined me. They had M-1 rifles and hand grenades. All I had was my 1911(A)-1 .45-caliber pistol, not much of an

offensive weapon. One of the men was taking a look over the edge of the crater when a shot rang out. It creased the strap of his combat pack. He was one lucky Marine. He said, "I'll get that son of a bitch," and took off over the top. I never saw him again.

In the meantime a few more men joined me in the hole. While we were deciding how to get out of there, a grenade went off. We thought it was a Jap grenade, but if it had been, I wouldn't be writing this now. What happened was that one of the men, who had grenades hanging from his belt, got one ready to go, pulled the pin, but dropped the grenade. It landed on the ground beside him, and his thigh took the full impact of the grenade. The thigh looked like hamburger, with lots of blood. Someone called, "Corpsman," and we started to give the man first aid, which consisted of dusting the wound with sulfa powder and applying a combat bandage, both of which we all carried. A short while later a corpsman appeared with his medical pack and a stretcher. He did some more work on the injured man, and then several of us put him on the stretcher and hauled him to an aid station which was set up on the beach.

After delivering the injured man, I looked around to see what was going on, and started to walk and crawl forward. I was with a couple of other Marines, but don't re-



*Company C amtank
riddled by shrapnel
in the Asan landing,
July 21, 1944*

member if they were First Armored or not. After carefully going forward a few hundred feet, we found another large crater and crawled in. Who should I find in there but Al (Allen J.) Stringer. With only a .45 for protection, he was no better off than I was. I didn't know what time it was or where the rest of the D-11 crew was, but about this time Staff Sergeant "Pop" (Arthur) King showed up with tank retriever D-Zero. The tank retriever was nothing more than an LVT-2 with the necessary rigging to recover and tow an LVTA-1. Pop and his crew went to work and soon had D-11 out of the hole. All at once the rest of the tank crew showed up, and we went back to war.

DALE L. BARKER, Company D

I was assigned as radio operator for D Company's maintenance tractor, D-Zero. I can't remember the crew members except for a corpsman and Staff Sergeant Arthur W. "Pop" King, head of D Company's maintenance section. King was called "Pop" probably because he was in his thirties. We made several trips into the beach to pull amtanks out of assorted traps. When Lieutenant Robert E. McDowell, the D Company commander, was having trouble with a radio on D-16, we moved over to him and I repaired it. After the rescue work subsided, we pulled back out onto the reef, from which we had a clear view of the sad spectacle of our three destroyed 1st Platoon amtanks, the general wreckage and carnage littering the reef, and the infantry, high in the hills, trying desperately to surmount Chonito Cliff. The corpsman with us had a supply of tiny bottles of some spirituous liquor—brandy, I suppose—which was apparently a standard first aid item. These seemed to appeal strongly to Pop King, the corpsman indulged him, and as the day wore on, Pop grew mellower and mellower.

WILLIS D. BOOTH, Company D

For W-Day on Guam I was assigned to a gas barge. This had come about because of a difference of opinion I had had back on Guadalcanal with Lieutenant Robert E. McDowell, the company commander, and I had ended up with the extra duty of repairing all the flat tires in the motor pool. I appealed to the Lieutenant to allow me to go to Guam with the Battalion in any capacity, and he agreed that I could go on the gas barge. On the day of the Guam landing, they unloaded the barge and the gas, and we shoved off to refuel the tanks. That was when I realized what a dangerous place that barge was. Later on in the day I hitched a ride to the beach on one of the tanks and was assigned to Lieutenant McDowell's tank.

THE LAND TANK MISSION

After the initial landing and after supporting the infantry ashore, the First Armored was committed to returning to the edge of the reef to assist in the transfer of land tanks from Navy landing craft onto and across the reef to the beach. Without the aid of the amtanks, the risk was that, in the transfer, land tanks might slip over the edge of the reef into deep water and be lost. Like the initial landing, this operation was carried out under enemy mortar and artillery fire and proved also to be hazardous.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

At the appropriate time the designated LVTAs moved back to the edge of the reef and met the incoming LCMs (Landing Craft, Mechanized) with their cargos of land tanks. With cables thrown from an LCM the LVTAs provided anchors which held the landing craft firmly on the reef. As the land tanks (M-4 medium tanks) moved onto the reef the armored amphibians led them around coral heads and pot holes to the beach. At this time Japanese artillery and mortar fire was falling on the beach and reef. I was

convinced that, though the shells were exploding, the water would hold the fragments in; not so! When several Marines in the water near me were hit, I realized that the fire was in fact deadly. I was happy to climb back into my LVTA as soon as our task was done.

In the official Marine Corp history, Colonel (later Lt. General) Edward A. Craig, commanding officer of the 9th Marines, was quoted as saying, "The tanks did a wonderful and dangerous job of getting ashore. Transferring those 45-ton tanks from a Navy landing craft to a sheer reef edge in choppy seas, and then driving them through rough coral spotted with deep potholes to the beach, was an accomplishment which I believe deserves special note. The method devised of holding the Navy landing craft by using LVTs and cables is also worthy of special note. The tanks would probably have never made it if someone had not worked out this method."

THOMAS T. OYLER, Company C

After reaching the shore the first time, tank C-4 returned to the edge of the reef to help guide incoming equipment around potholes. As we approached land a second



Major Metzger standing on damaged amtank C-10 after the Asan landing, July 21, 1944. (Paul)

time, we opened the hatch so that some of the smoke from Joseph S. Osieczonek's rapid firing could escape. A shell hit the hatch cover. PFC Billy J. Christian, in one of the gun wells, was killed and I was injured. Later, when the hatch was examined carefully, it was thought that one of our own 20mm rounds had hit the turret.

ROBERT C. BLAEMIRE, Company C

We left the beach to go out to the edge of the coral reef and hold LCMs steady while they unloaded Sherman tanks onto the reef. The rear end of our tank was toward

the beach while we jumped out, topside of the tank, to handle the cables from the LCM. We then had to lead a Sherman tank in shallow water, past shell holes, to the beach.

GEORGE F. ROBERTS, Company D

Our secondary mission was to lead the medium tanks in over the reef after they got out of the LCMs, to keep them from falling into potholes. A DUKW (a big amphibious truck) got blown up out of the water. Some of the tanks on our left flank took



Maintenance tractor D-0 changing the engine of a stranded amtank after the Asan landing, July 21, 1944. (Paul)

some hits, but we suffered only one bullet hole through my hatch handle. I later blamed this on Chick (John W.) Regentz, who was operating the .30-caliber on the driver's side. After that we were on beach defense, waiting assignment.

FIRST NIGHT ON THE ASAN BEACHES

At 1500 twelve Company D tanks again assaulted Adelup Point, firing till their ammunition was exhausted. Throughout the first night ashore, enemy mortar and artillery shelling of the Asan beachhead was heavy, almost constant. Except for some minor thrusts in the vicinity of Adelup Point and Bundschu Ridge, enemy efforts at infantry counterattack were light, much less intense than on the Agat beaches. The main counterattack against the Asan beachhead would come four nights later. Enemy shelling was so heavy that unloading of supplies and equipment had to be suspended at about 0200, and some of the amtanks moved off the beach out onto the reef. One Company D man was killed and six wounded when shells fell onto tanks D-9 and D-10. The enemy shells landing on the beach and the U.S. Navy shells passing over the beach from out at sea combined to give everyone a restless night.

BEAUFORD A. GALIEN, Company C

Our second landing, Guam, was the worst in my mind. My good buddy, Grady D. Farmer, and I were in the same tank, he as machine gunner and I as ammunition passer. We shared the same foxhole. That night the Navy battlewagons offshore lobbed flares onto shore to light up their targets. The night sky was filled with the streamers from the flares. An eerie sight! To make matters worse, it was monsoon season. Even though we made a roof of palm fronds over our foxhole, it soon collapsed, and we were lying in water, holding our rifles above our chests to keep them out of the water. Enemy snipers were busy all night, keeping us flat in our foxhole. We started laughing about something, but that was no laughing matter. It was one of the spookiest nights I have ever been through.

ROBERT C. BLAEMIRE, Company C

Because the infantry only got 300 yards inland on the first day, the beach became so crowded that our tanks had to sit in the water along Asan Point through the night. The Japs mortared the beach most of the night. Just before daylight, Lieutenant Harold D. Holder said, "Let's get out of here; I've got a funny feeling." He was right. Just as we moved the 3d Platoon tanks out, the Nips landed mortars exactly where we had been sitting. They had zeroed us in the night before. They followed us with mortars till we got out of their range, far out on the coral reef. I thought then that if I lived through Guam I'd live to go home. But then came Okinawa, and I had new doubts.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

With our initial assigned missions completed, we dug in, as the enemy fire was falling in the area. I suppose we did fill a function in providing depth to the American penetration. That night we continued to dig in as deeply as possible, took cover under our vehicles, and "hunkered down," as sporadic enemy artillery and mortar fire fell into our positions.

GEORGE F. ROBERTS, Company D

After a harrowing night of flares, noise, nearby banzai charges, etc., we were chased off the beach at daylight by heavy Jap mortar fire. The crew kept yelling at me to get the tank moving.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

In late afternoon we took up positions for beach defense. I don't remember eating or making a head run all day. Anyhow where would a guy make a head run. There was quite a bit of enemy firing on our positions, hitting several of our tanks and causing severe casualties. As night fell we were all set for beach defense. We had the beach, but the high ground was still in enemy hands. It was getting darker and darker, and the darker it got the more we thought there were objects moving out in the water.

It was a terribly long night. The battlewagons and cruisers were out of sight, but we would see the flashes of their guns firing in the distance. A few seconds later we would actually see the red glow of the shells flying overhead, and then explosions inland.

RICHARD ZENGER, Company D

We spent the first night on the beach in the vicinity of our first landing. We had almost constant incoming mortar fire that first night, and there were lots of wounded, but no one from D-6, my tank, was hit. As I recall, someone from a neighboring tank was holed up under the downward sloping bow of his tank and took some shrapnel that ricocheted from the tank. Heavy bombardment from the ships continued throughout the night. The 16-inch shells going over sounded something like freight trains going by. There was an occasional illuminating shell which made an eerie light and strange shadows as it descended on its parachute.

C. L. WHITLOCK, Company D

We bivouacked that night, with D-9 and D-10, my tank, side by side for beach defense. At 2200 hours the Japs laid down a heavy mortar barrage on our two tanks for about a half hour. The other D-10 machine gunner, Corporal John P. Murphy of Florida was killed. Five others from the two tanks were injured, among them PFC Art (Albert R.) Thompson of Detroit, the D-10 driver, and Robert M. Lytton, our tank commander. There were two of us left who had come on D-10 from the States together, and I wondered which one would be next.

DONALD SCHARF, Company D

The first night on Guam was a real test of endurance, the worst of the three campaigns for me. While the Marine infantry moved inland up the hill, we turned our tanks around facing the sea in case of a rear attack. We dug our foxholes and settled in with our K rations as night began to fall. After dark, flares on parachutes lit up the beach. As the flares swung from side to side, shadows moved making it look like Japs were moving among our tanks. I was never so afraid in all my life. All of us were jumpy and on edge. Suddenly all hell broke loose. There was a lot of yelling, grenades were going off on the hill, rifles and machine guns were firing, shells were landing on the beach, and shrapnel was flying in all directions. We crunched ourselves deeper into the foxholes, and some crawled as far as they could under the tanks. I was shaking so hard my teeth were clicking. When daylight came, we went up the hill to see what had happened. It was a sight to make stomachs turn, with parts of bodies covering the hillside, and blood and guts everywhere. The Japs, yelling Banzai, had counterattacked the Marine infantry lines between them and our tanks on the beach. There were no Japs left alive in that area.

GUAM AFTER W-DAY

For more than two weeks after W-Day, the First Armored was a divided battalion. Companies A and B and a detachment of H&S Company continued on the Agat beaches under Captain Warga in support of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade. Companies C and D and the other H&S detachment supported the 3d Division in the Asan beachhead under Major Metzger's command. The two beachheads were not joined until July 25, when the 9th Marines of the 3d Division and the 22d Marines of the Brigade made contact. Even after that the two contingents of the Battalion continued separate operations. First Armored tanks and men were engaged in beach defense in both areas and carried out assigned missions as required by the Brigade or Division commands. Compared to our primary mission of beach assault, most subsequent amtank operations were minor, but some contributed significantly to the campaign and are certainly well remembered by the participants. It is notable in these operations that, because of losses on W-Day, platoon-size forces were usually made up of survivors from two or more platoons. Not till August 6 was a bivouac for the whole battalion established. By August 7 most units had been brought together in one location, not far south of Agat.

DAY TWO ON THE ASAN BEACHES

After a bad night, some reorganization and repair of men and tanks was needed, as well as getting on with the war. The 2d Platoon of D Company was sent to fire on the gun positions on Adelup Point. In the afternoon three platoons from Companies C and D engaged in an assault on Cabras Island. All that day the 3d Division infantry was waging a bitter fight on the cliffs and ridges above Asan beaches.

C. L. WHITLOCK, *Company D*

On the second day, July 22, I was transferred temporarily to D-9. We fired on Adelup Point, then sat on the reef and watched the mountainside battle. That night the mortar barrage was light.

RICHARD ZENGER, *Company D*

On Day Two on Guam, D Company was sent to the left flank to fire on a Jap gun position on Adelup Point which had been laying fire along our landing beach. I later saw the long cave where the gun was protected after each firing. It was eventually silenced, and I'm sure we did them in. At least, we found several unexploded 37mm rounds from our guns in the cave when we went there after the island was secured.

LOUIS METZGER, *Battalion Commander*

As the 3d, 21st and 9th Marines clawed their way up the commanding terrain over the beachhead, there was nothing to do but accept the incoming Japanese mortar and artillery fire. On 22 July [W+1 Day], accompanied by Lieutenant Thomas M. Crosby

(the Operations Officer), and by the Battalion Communications Officer, I went to the 3d Division command post, located in a dry river bed several thousand yards inland from the beach. Just as we arrived, mortar fire hit the command post, killing the Division G-1 (personnel officer) and wounding several Marines. After arranging our movement from the beach area to a more suitable location, we started back across an open field, only to be pinned down by artillery and mortar fire. It made one feel very exposed just lying there with shells hitting all about. I remember trying to decide what part of me would be the best to expose to the incoming fire. I thought perhaps the left side but, considering my heart was on that side, just remained still. When the "incoming" ceased, I was surprised that the Communications Officer did not move. I thought he had been hit, but could find no wound. He was evacuated, and the later medical report came back that, in simple terms, it was "shell shock."

THE CABRAS ISLAND OPERATION

At 1130 on July 22 (W+1), two platoons of Company C and the 3d Platoon of company D assembled on the Agana-Piti road near Asan Point. From there they followed amtracs of the 3d Amphibian Tractor Battalion by road to the little town of Tepungan, where men of the 9th Marines loaded onto the amtracs. At 1400 the First

GUAM CHRONOLOGY

Date	Companies A & B	Companies C & D
7/21	Agat landing	Asan landing
7/22	8 tanks support 22d Marines in Agat	3 platoons (2C+1D) attack Cabras Island
7/24	22d Marines seal off Orote Peninsula. 6 Co. A tanks in Orote Peninsula operation	
7/25		Major enemy counterattack at night on Asan beachhead
7/29	Bivouac moved to area north of Agat. 1 platoon supports 22d Marines on Orote	
7/30	2 tanks sent to pick up Japanese prisoner	
7/31	1 platoon supports 4th Marines on Orote	Companies support advance through Agana
8/ 2		Bivouac at Agana ball park
8/ 4	1 Co. B platoon begins guard of III Phib Corps CP	
8/ 6	Cos. C & D move to last Bn bivouac, south of Agat	
8/ 7	Cos. A & B move to Bn bivouac south of Agat, reuniting the Battalion	
8/ 9	Lt. Alex leads force clearing Cocos Island	
8/10	Guam declared secure	
8/11	The III Phib Corps CP guard detail is secured	
8/12	The Battalion embarks and leaves Guam	

Note: Not listed above are beach defense, which was every night from 7/21 to 8/7; maintenance and repair work, which was constant; and minor missions such as transporting supplies.

Armored tanks led the tractors south of Tepungan, toward Piti, and then turned off the road toward the beach. From that point they led the attack on Cabras Island, the narrow island, about two miles long, which forms part of the northern shelter of Apra Harbor. The am tanks blasted away at the beaches until the am tracs passed between them and delivered the infantrymen ashore. That night the same First Armored tanks, plus a company of am tracs and a platoon of medium land tanks were set up for beach defense in the Tepungan sector, all assigned to Major Metzger's command. They continued in this duty till July 31. The Major would be able to collect the bell of the Piti Navy Yard to present to the friendly Navy people back on Florida Island.

WILLIAM MOIR, Company D

On D+1, July 22, D-14 and the rest of D Company's 3d Platoon joined C Company in supporting the 9th Marines in a landing on Cabras Island. There were no

SOME GUAM GEOGRAPHY

Agana	Capital of Guam. Preinvasion population 10,000.
Orote Peninsula	Most prominent geographic feature of Guam's west coast, southern flank of Apra Harbor.
Apra Harbor	On Guam's west coast, guarded by Orote Peninsula on the south and Cabras Island on the north.
Cabras Island	Narrow, 2 miles long, bounding Apra Harbor on the north.
Agat	Village south of Orote Peninsula, site of landing by Companies A & B.
Asan	Village north of Orote Peninsula & Apra Harbor, site of landing by Companies C & D.
Gaan Point	Small projection of land in the center of the Agat landing beaches.
Bangi Point	Small projection of land on the right flank of the Agat landing beaches.
Yona	Small island on the right flank of the Agat landing beaches.
Alutom	Small island on the right flank of the Agat landing beaches.
Mt. Alifan	Mountain inland from the Agat landing beaches.
Asan Point	Small projection of land on the right flank of the Asan landing beaches.
Adelup Point	Small projection of land on the left flank of the Asan landing beaches.
Chonito Cliff	Behind the Asan landing beaches.
Bundschu Ridge	Behind the Asan landing beaches.
Sumay	Town on Orote Peninsula.
Marine Barracks	On Orote Peninsula; destroyed in the prelanding bombardment.
Piti	Town and navy yard on Apra Harbor, near Cabras Island.
Tepungan	Village north of Piti, near Cabras Island.
Atatano	Village on Apra Harbor near the neck of Orote Peninsula.
Dadi Beach	On the south coast of Orote Peninsula, at the neck.
Apaca Point	Small projection of land on the south coast of Orote Peninsula, at the neck.
Ayuja River	North of Agat.

casualties. After that we had to go out to a ship to refuel the tank and caught mortar fire on the way. The shells splashed all around us as we moved through the water.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

Eighteen LVTAs and a company of the 3d Tractor Battalion supported the 9th Marines' shore-to-shore attack on Cabras Island. Resistance was light, but the area was



The Flag raised over Guam again. (USMC)

heavily mined. The official Marine Corps history of the operation states, "Shortly after 1400, the armored amphibians crawled out across the reef and began shelling the beaches on the eastern end of Cabras. The tractor-borne assault platoons followed, avoiding the mined causeway and moving across the reef and water. At 1425 they clattered ashore on the elongated islet. There was no defending fire, but there was a defense. Marines soon found that the ground was liberally strewn with mines . . . One LVT (cargo carrier) was blown up by a mine while it was returning." There was no resistance, but the island had been completely fortified.

W+1 & 2 ON THE AGAT BEACHES

The 4th Marines moved inland and took Mt. Alifan on Day Two, July 22, and by the next day had made the Agat beachhead relatively secure. The Army's 305th Regimental Combat Team came ashore, taking over the left flank, relieving the 22d Marines for a drive toward sealing off the base of the Orote Peninsula. In the absence of sufficient amphibian tractors, First Armored amtanks were called on in the first days for duty in hauling cargo from ships to shore and from shore to the front lines. This was in addition to the ongoing work of beach defense and tank maintenance and repair. On July 22, eight tanks were sent to ferry cargo across the Ayuja River north of Agat. The terrain was found to be impassable, however, and the crewmen of those tanks assisted infantrymen in carrying supplies and ammunition across the river on foot. The low level of activity on July 22 and 23 proved to be a lull between the costly landings on W-Day and furious action on July 24. There was little rest for the 4th and 22d Marines in these two days as they pushed ahead in the face of a stubborn and well organized enemy defense.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

Company A wasn't in any action on July 22 and 23, though I'm sure we did beach defense. I remember working at night in a DUKW, hauling cloverleaves of artillery shells from a ship to the beach. When our work ceased in the middle of the night, one of my adventurous buddies decided we'd take a DUKW for a trial run. None of us had ever been in one before, but we figured out how to get it going and headed out into the water. It was not long before a couple of search lights came on us and we were challenged as to who we were and what we were doing. We then decided to take the DUKW back to shore and catch some sleep.

During those two days there was an artillery battery sharing the field with us. They were 155mm howitzers aimed north beyond Agat. I was walking across the field once, about 200 feet in front of them, when they touched them off. My gosh, I thought the blast, concussion and noise would take me off the field!

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

On July 22 (W+1) the artillery moved in some "Long Toms" and set up close to our bivouac area, where they started shelling Orote Peninsula, softening it for the big push.

In the first days after the landing, we carried supplies and ammo from the beach to the front lines, and on one trip we found seven pups up on Mt. Alifan. They were literally covered with fleas and half dead from starvation. I, naturally, volunteered to take care of them. Did that turn out to be a job, especially at night! If I didn't talk to them, they would yelp all night. We washed them and got all the fleas off. When they had their first meal, they ate till their little bellies swelled to the size of a small orange and they could barely walk. We later had to separate them, and I got one I called Nipper, the scrappiest of them all. She got bigger and more lively day by day. I had her trained so that when she slept with us, she would crawl out to relieve herself. We also discovered a supply of sake on Mt. Alifan, and a lot of the guys got drunk, including some who had never touched liquor before.

THE OROTE PENINSULA OPERATION

On Monday morning, July 24, six tanks, survivors taken from all three of Company A's platoons, were ordered to support the 22d Marines in a drive to seal off the base of the Orote Peninsula and bottle up the Japanese troops there. The amtanks were instructed to fire from the sea on the cliffs and caves of the shore as the infantry moved northward on shore. Jump off time for the infantry was at first set for 0900, but was twice delayed, a half hour each time. Though the amtanks made several passes at the target areas, they drew heavy artillery, mortar, and machine gun fire and suffered serious damage. One amtank was sunk and three of the others severely damaged. Three Company A men were killed and five wounded.

ROBERT A. FISH, Company A

On the morning of the fourth day on Guam, Lieutenant Thomas J. Garfield, Major Richard G. Warga, and I were summoned to the command center of Colonel Merlin F. Schneider, commanding officer of the 22d Marines. He outlined our task to support the left flank of the 22d Regiment as it advanced toward Orote Peninsula.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

On July 24, the 1st Battalion of the 22d Marines asked for help in their advance north beyond Agat. Our outfit was to fire from the sea at Jap positions up on cliffs, keeping them busy so the 22d could move in on them. Six A Company tanks were still seaworthy and mechanically okay: A-3, A-9, A-13, A-15, A-16, and A-17. My tank, A-10, couldn't go because of some sort of mechanical problem. We had taken a piece of shrapnel in the rear of the tank, near the engine, but I had not thought it hurt anything. The tanks departed from Agat and were soon to experience hell. They made four lateral passes at the target cliffs and drew fire from every gun and manner of fire power up there. A-17 was sunk. A-13 took a direct hit on the turret, and all the rest were so riddled with shrapnel and bullet holes that they could hardly limp back into Agat without sinking. All did return but A-17. Several men were killed or wounded.

DANIEL H. MAYNARD, Company A

On July 24, the fourth day ashore, six Company A tanks supported the 22d Marines in opening the way to the Orote Peninsula. Lieutenant Robert A. Fish explained the mission. Our six tanks were to keep the enemy pinned down with machine gun and cannon fire along the cliff in order to prevent them from interfering with our infantry troops advancing along the top of those cliffs. The infantry were to display a front line panel on the beach, and we were to allow them a 200-yard safety angle while firing. We were to move northwest from the village of Agat in column, then execute a right flank movement and move in towards the beach on line, as far as the coral reef. We were ordered to withdraw seaward immediately if we drew heavy accurate mortar and artillery fire.

We left Agat at about 0845 and moved out to sea in column. At about 1000 yards off Apaca Point we executed the right flank movement, but remained there until about 0939 as H-Hour had been delayed. The position of tanks from left to right were as follows: A-17, A-15, A-16, A-13, A-3, A-9. We were drifting slowly towards the reef and were about 100 yards from it. At that time we began to receive light and heavy machine gun fire and also mortar fire. That fire was extremely accurate and was falling all around us. The formation made a right about and withdrew seaward about 600 yards. Then a rain squall came up and the sea became very choppy. Visibility was very poor and most of the radio communications very bad. I saw that A-17 and A-9 had withdrawn as far as the rest of the tanks and were still firing at caves in the side of the cliffs.

All tanks moved in towards the beach firing all guns. A 77mm Jap gun [sic]

opened up on us from one of the caves and was bracketing several of the tanks. We could see that A-17 was almost against the reef and was listing to port and forward. There was no sign of activity aboard, and no members of her crew could be seen although the tank was still drawing fire from machine guns. The rest of the tanks made four more firing runs in all, but the Jap 77mm gun, and also the mortars and machine guns, had the range. I signaled A-16 to come alongside us, and they did, but they also did not have radio contact with the rest of the unit.

We went alongside LST 78 and requested that heavy gunfire be laid down on the Jap 77 gun position so we could go in and see if there were any survivors from A-17. My request was refused. I then asked for a small boat to go in as it would have the speed and maneuverability we lacked. This also was denied. Soon after this a boat was observed picking up the crew of Tank A-17.

I then received word that both Lieutenant Thomas J. Garfield and Lieutenant Robert A. Fish were wounded and that I was in command. I received orders to take the remaining tanks to Agat where I met Lieutenant Ellis M. Livingston, who asked me what shape the tanks were in. A-17 had been sunk, A-13 had received a direct hit on the turret, and the rest were so full of shrapnel that they would not remain waterborne for any length of time. We then received word to return to our bivouac area.

ROBERT W. PIERCE, Company A

Some of the remaining A Company tanks were selected to make a waterborne run against a gun emplacement toward Orote Peninsula. We had a number of casualties resulting from that operation, but heard later that we were instrumental in knocking out the weapon by drawing fire and making it a target for Naval shelling. I remember sobbing inside as we removed our dead comrades from the machine gun hatches. Ollie (Oliver T.) Dowling received a concussion, but did not go to the hospital for observation. He complained of headaches and dizziness, but refused any special attention. He seemed to be in a state of mild shock for a long time thereafter. After the war Ollie hosted the first official First Armored reunion in Rapid City, South Dakota.

DONALD L. FERCHAU, Company A

For the action on July 24 (W+3) our CP, "Whitey" (Thomas I.) Coleman, got a message to abort the mission, but he could not get anybody's attention. On that day I almost killed my friend, "Bangor" (Oliver T. Dowling), the other machine gunner on A-17. I had fired so many rounds my machine gun barrel lost its rifling. For visual sighting, every fifth or sixth round we fired was a tracer. Since all my tracers were somersaulting out to sea, I knew all the rest were also. We always carried an extra barrel and an asbestos mitt so we could replace a barrel when it got that hot. My barrel was so hot it was firing on its own. A Jap mortar landed and barely missed us, but the concussion forced me to lose my grip, and the gun went off right into the back of the turret. Hot lead splattered everywhere. "Pinky" (Ralph E. Pope, the driver) was swerv-

ing right and left as Jap mortars barely missed their target. Again I lost my grip and the gun went off again, this time squarely at Bangor's back, just below the shoulder blades. The slugs hit that slightly curved piece of metal we leaned back against when we wanted to turn our machine guns. But the slugs exploded and sprayed Bangor with hot lead across his back. He reached over his left shoulder, turned to me, and yelled, "Frenchy, you son of a bitch, you shot me!" Just then a mortar burst opposite his gun flattened Bangor with its concussion. I looked down at Bangor, sitting with his head in his hands. But he said he was all right and, to my relief, bounced up and started firing again. I finally got my gun pinned, changed the barrel, backed it off 13 clicks, and resumed firing.

ROBERT A. FISH, Company A

In that maneuver we were spaced in a column just outside the reef. All went well for the first 15 to 20 minutes. Then I started seeing shell splashes and could hear projectiles going just overhead. I opened the turret hatch and jacked up the seat to get better visibility. With my field glasses I spotted a muzzle flash from a point about 1000 yards away that looked as if it was coming from a cave. In the meantime Jap soldiers with small arms were firing at us from the shore line. We were going to proceed to this position when the tank was hit. I think the shell exploded under the turret basket. The explosion stunned me, and I could see blood spurting from my legs. Knowing that others had been injured, I ordered the crew to abandon tank. The next thing I knew several of us were in the water, and the Japs on the beach were still sending small arms fire our way. We couldn't get on the reef because the small arms fire was heavy. I can't remember the names of all the crew, but Douglas W. Nash, Howard W. Hayes and Paul R. Breme were there. Nash and Breme helped me get my shoes and pants off. I was so weak from loss of blood that they helped me stay afloat until a Navy boat came in and picked us up.

We were taken aboard a ship. I remember a doctor who examined me saying to a corpsman, "Give him a transfusion. His blood pressure is only 40." That tank crew was a bunch of Marines that upheld the finest standard of the Marine Corps. I am proud to have been a member of that tank crew and will never forget them or the action we were involved in. I was proud of their courage and behavior in a very deadly situation. I am not sure, but I think Hayes was killed by rifle fire from the beach.

I was sent to a hospital in Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides Islands. Once while I was in a wheelchair there Bob Hope came by. After about two months it was back to duty with the First Armored on Guadalcanal.

WILLIAM D. GERMAIN, Company A

We were to go in from the sea and fire on the cliffs at the same time as coordinated infantry advances and air strikes. The attack was delayed some 30 or 40 minutes. Our company commander was on the radio so much we didn't get the order

to delay. So we went in, firing on the cliffs and drawing all the fire on ourselves. Ours was the only tank not hit by direct shell fire, though we could feel the concussion of near misses. We went toward the shore to help injured crews from other tanks who were in the water. I remember an LCI that had come in with us, and saw its gun crew get blown off of it. The LCI then went in reverse and left it all to us. We tried to get help from the ship, but the commander wouldn't send in boats. But one red-headed sailor disobeyed and took off to help. Lieutenant Robert A. Fish was wounded. Bruce A. Rylott's tank was hit in the turret, and he was killed. Donald J. Fiedler, the CP, was killed, and Leroy Robertson, the driver, was wounded. Rylott's brother, who was in the Army, came to see him just when his tank came back and they pulled him from the turret. What a shock!

FRED ADDISON, Company A

About two hours after the men returned, another Marine—I think Bob (Robert W.) Pierce—and I were asked to clean up the insides of one tank, and we went in with rags and buckets of water. I remember mopping blood out of the radioman's area. The interior of a tank is very hot in the tropics; the sweet, sickly smell stuck with me for a long time. That mission was the finale to A Company tank action for that campaign.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

When A Company returned from their mission to support the offensive against Orote Peninsula, they were pretty well shot up. We watched while the dead and wounded were removed from the tanks. "Sacktime" (Harvey B.) Evans and George L. Cash, who had had too much sake, were watching with us. When a dead CP was lifted out feet first, and they came to his head, which wasn't there, Sacktime cracked. He was evacuated the next day. Sacktime was a veteran of action on Guadalcanal. The CP was Donald J. Fiedler, a friend of mine.

MINOR MISSIONS IN THE GUAM FOLLOW-UP

After the Cabras Island and Orote Peninsula operations, the First Armored was called mostly for minor actions. The beaches continued to receive mortar and artillery fire at night. Beach defense was routine, and the heavy damage to the amtanks, weapons, and radios kept maintenance personnel and crewmen busy. Missions besides beach defense included sometimes acting as land tanks, sometimes as cargo carriers. Until about August 7, the two halves of the Battalion bivouacked separately. Amtanks from Company B assisted between July 26 and 29 in the conquest of Orote Peninsula. Companies C and D participated in the advance through Agana. Gradually, however, the battle for Guam moved away from the landing beaches and away from the First Armored. Two events on the night of July 25/26 were harrowing for other troops, but had little effect on the First Armored crews. East of Adelup Point the Japanese staged a massive counterattack, their greatest single effort to drive American forces from the

island. Coincidentally those enemy forces bottled up on Orote Peninsula tried desperately that same night to break out. Both efforts failed completely.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

We heard about an enemy counterattack in which the Division Hospital was almost overrun. Corporal James A. Shiley of D Company was a patient there at the time. Later, back on Guadalcanal, he was evacuated because of malaria.

EDWARD G. RIZKALLA, Company C

Tommy (Ralph T.) Miers and I shared a foxhole. For several days we were under very heavy mortar fire. You could always tell by the whistle how close those shells were coming. Once the whistle was so loud I thought this was it. The shell must have hit a couple of feet in front of the foxhole because, as I ducked, I could feel the dirt falling on my back. Tommy said to me, "Rizkalla, I am so scared!" I answered, "Who wouldn't be." The following day, I saw on the far end of the beach a landing barge coming into the beach filled with Marines. It got a direct hit from a mortar, and I saw those men blown into the air.

HOWARD W. VAN KESSEL, Company D

Once the Asan beachhead was secured sufficiently for the infantry to move further inland, supply ships started to send in cargo and provisions to the beach. With much confusion on the beach we were able to supply our tank, D-16, with coffee, cigarettes,



War dogs and handlers on Guam. (USMC)

canned fruit, and C and K Rations. We waited on the beach for orders to position our tanks closer to the front lines. For three nights and days we hardly moved as the left flank was still in peril from mortars and whatever the Japs could throw at us.

To hold the front lines at night, the Marines brought in watch dogs in dog-man teams. With dogs

barking at night, vicious to all except their masters, and with ongoing rifle fire, everyone was kept on the alert. At daylight the dog-man teams would come to rest under our tanks to eat, drink, and sleep as much as possible. One morning, as all seemed calm, I

left my watch position in the gun turret of D-16. I jumped down off the back of the tank and, when I hit the ground, one of those dogs was up, growling, with teeth snapping, at the end of a short chain. A totally unexpected encounter. I believe that was my most frightful experience.

The next morning as several dog-man teams came down from the hills, we learned one of the Marines had been killed on duty. On another team the dog had been shot and killed. This led to a very difficult association when they paired the one-man dog and the man who had lost his dog. The new union began to work out, however, as they seemed to be accepting each other and were able to continue their duties as a team.

WILLIS D. BOOTH, Company D

On the second or third day on Guam, Lieutenant McDowell sent me with a message to three of our tanks located on the other side of Adelup Point, north of our beachhead. I could go there either by water, wading out on the reef, or by walking on the road above the beach through a cut in the hill. I chose the road, and a Jap sniper tried to pick me off. I finally decided I would have to make a run from the protection of the cut to the ditch by the road and from there down to the beach where our tanks were. As I jumped into the ditch, I heard a roar and a growl like a lion, and I thought I had had it. It was a Marine and his Doberman, hiding in the ditch. Fortunately the dog was tied up or I would have been "dog meat" for sure. I got the message to the tank okay but, because it opened up an attack on us, I was not welcomed with open arms.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

By July 26 (W+5) Company A was in a bivouac area about three-fourths of a mile south of Agat. We were still receiving artillery fire at night, but no casualties. My partner and I slept pretty comfortably in our hole. On the 26th I got my first bath and change of clothes since being on the island. A big shell hole in the field behind us was full of water. We just waded in, got wet, crawled out, soaped up, and dove back in to rinse off. It must have been contagious, for some of the local Chamorro ladies came down after we had left the hole. They peeled off their clothes and also cleaned up, amid a lot of giggling from them and whistling from us. The one pair of binoculars we had on the remaining tanks were rapidly passed back and forth among us.

On July 29 we moved our bivouac area to about one mile north of Agat. We couldn't see the beach, which was perhaps a third of a mile west of us. We were in a jungle, right on the edge of a swamp, and again serving as backup. On my turn on watch, I thought the mosquitos would carry me away; it was terribly hot and humid, and I had to wear my head net. There were a lot of mines and booby traps around, and I kept "seeing things" in the swamp. The front line for the 22d Marines was by then at the end of the Orote Peninsula, about 1.8 miles north-northwest of us. We bivouacked there through August 6 and were able to wash clothes, air blankets, and straighten the foxhole area and the crude covering we had built over it out of shelter halves, tin, and boards.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

After W-Day we stood by, going on missions when called on. Once we were ordered to bring in Japs who had taken refuge on a small island off Orote Peninsula. We took a Jap along in one of the tractors to inform them over a loudspeaker that we wanted them as prisoners. There were only two of them, and they surrendered without trouble.

DONALD C. HOUSTON, Company B

My tank developed a crack in the port gas tank on Guam, and two or three days after W-Day my crew and a couple of others had to go on a mission up the beach. Knowing there was raw gas in the bilge, we were not too happy about it. The day before, the Japanese had knocked out a tank or two in the same area. We met no resistance, however, and I got a replacement gas tank a day or two later.

Another mission on Guam was a landing just below the Orote airstrip. The day before, a squad of Marine infantry on a recon patrol had been wiped out, and we had to go in and clean out the enemy and bring out the bodies of the slain infantrymen. We went in very cautiously, believe me. Most of the enemy had holed up in some caves into which we were firing, about 40 feet distant. On my tank, the driver stalled the engine. As we had been transmitting on the radio a lot and the auxiliary generator ("Little Joe") wouldn't start, the batteries were low. This was no problem as hostilities had ended by then. The infantry had thrown a couple of flame-thrower charges into the cave. There were something like 26 bodies in the cave. When we got out of the tank, getting ready for a tow start, we found, no more than four or five feet in front of the port track, a 17-pound horned mine. Had the engine started, we would have hit it. Talk about the hand of fate!

EARL M. HILL, Company B

Several days after the initial landing, on the day I consider to be the most danger-filled period of my entire life, I found myself aboard an amtank commanded by the B Company commander, Lieutenant Edgar S. Carlson. He was leading a column of amtanks toward Apra Harbor, north of Orote Peninsula. A small island in the harbor needed to be cleared of pockets of stubborn enemy resistance. Our amphibious vehicles were thought to offer solutions. We entered the water southeast of the island and immediately came under automatic weapons fire. The source appeared to be in caves and other excavations on the island. Our tanks returned 37mm and .30-caliber fire as we maneuvered for positions from which to assault the caves. As the mouths of the various caves came into view, our 37mm gunners loaded white phosphorus projectiles and fired them into the caves. The terrible heat and smoke of the white phosphorus speedily induced the defenders within the excavations to evacuate. This was an exciting engagement, being both relatively safe for the participating Marines and highly productive in the effort to secure the small island and Guam. At the radio, I was in

contact with Battalion headquarters back at Agat Beach, and under considerable pressure from the Battalion commander, Major Metzger, to put the company commander on, to report on the progress of the operation. Despite my best efforts on the intercom, the company commander was far too distracted with the ongoing battle to switch his headset over to the Battalion frequency. He continued hollering at our tank crew and other tank commanders. I did what I could, in my lowly capacity as a PFC radio operator, to keep the Major informed on the state of the battle.

After the mop-up at Apra Harbor our tanks came ashore on the mainland of Guam at a point different from where we had embarked. Our lead amtank was rolling slowly along a sandy road when I noticed a partially buried shallow wooden crate. Recalling warnings during training about booby traps and mines, I asked the driver to stop, and dismounted from the tank to check the crate. Gingerly lifting the crate out of the roadbed, I was greeted by the sight of a shiny, metallic finned detonator protruding from the ground. As it happened, demolition specialists were working in the area and, using implements as varied as camel's hair brushes and a 24-inch Stilson wrench, they soon disarmed the mine. We resumed our travel to Agat Beach.

At one point while traveling at the head of our convoy along the road from Apra Harbor to Agat Beach, I was annoyed by a repetitive clanging thump near the catwalk at the right front corner of the tank. The cause of this phenomenon was usually a large rock wedged in the grousers of the track, striking the low point along the catwalk each full revolution of the track. I wondered how long the tank commander—in this case, Lieutenant Edgar S. Carlson—would tolerate this condition before calling a halt to deal with it. But just then our tank crew began to notice some very peculiar conduct on the part of Marine infantry troops marching in extended single file along the right-hand edge of the road. As our vehicle drew abreast of these troops, they would give us a horrified stare and dive headlong into the nearest ditch or shell hole, mud-filled though they all were. Lieutenant Carlson stopped our column and instructed me to find out what the hell was terrifying our infantry brothers and, incidentally, what the hell was the cause of the thumping and bumping of our right track. I climbed down and scrutinized the right side of the amtank. The only irregularity I saw was a cylindrical object jammed between a pair of grousers on the track. I asked the driver for a jimmy bar and, with this brutal instrument, pried the cylinder from the track. It proved to be an unexploded five-inch projectile deposited by the recent naval bombardment. I lowered it gently into a nearby shell hole just evacuated by a muddy Marine infantryman. Our column rolled on toward Agat.

At Agat our Battalion camp area was being reorganized, and our vehicles being parked in a more military manner than had been the case since W-Day. Senior NCOs were directing traffic and supervising the distribution of vehicles. When a series of tracked vehicles turn at the same point on soft ground, the inside tracks gouge out an excavation at that place in the road surface. As our tank was approaching one of these turning points, I noticed a silvery metallic object in the gouged excavation. Having in mind our experience earlier in the day with the buried mine at Apra Harbor, I attempted

to call the attention of the traffic-directing NCO to the object. He ignored me and ordered our tank and several others through and past the turning point. After parking our tank, I walked back to get a close look at the object. More unexploded naval ordnance. Exposed at the bottom of the excavation, and apparently driven deeper by each vehicle that passed over it, was a sixteen-inch dud! An elaborate engraved legend, stating the U.S. Navy's specifications, was still legible on the tail end of the projectile. Had it exploded as our tank scraped across, I suspect that neither the tank nor its occupants would yet have fallen to the earth. Perhaps it had been disarmed earlier, and the NCO knew that. Or perhaps to him, as to me, the whole scenario seemed unreal.

CHARLES E. PERKINS, Company B

On our third day on Guam I wound up in the hospital with dengue fever or fungus. We lost our tank, B-1, while I was in the hospital. The hospital was on a knoll, looking down on the stockade where Jap prisoners were held. While there I saw a Guamanian boy, ten or twelve years old, stick a knife in a prisoner who had cut off the boy's fingers or those of someone in his family.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

On July 29 A and B Companies set up a bivouac area a little north of Agat. It was the only town we had seen, just a village. There was nothing left but an occasional cement foundation or wall. It was difficult to tell where the streets ran. Fortunately the natives had evacuated Agat before our ships and planes tore it apart.

It was monsoon season, and rain beat down several times a day. All we had for cover was a hole with a poncho over it. We could also crawl into a tank, but that was worse. Everyone was wet, mud-covered, bearded, and weary. Food was K rations three times a day: cheese, ham or pork mixed with egg yolk, dog biscuits, a stick of something called gum, and three Chelsea cigarettes.

For two weeks after W-Day we stood by, going on missions when called. Orders were given to bring in prisoners, and one prisoner *was* brought in. On one mission a few of us were called on to go out to a small offshore island with tractors of infantrymen to see what could be found. Our tanks went first, surrounding the island, with all guns trained on it. When nothing happened, we proceeded to pull up onto the beach and stopped. That little island was one large pillbox. In one of the tractors they had a Jap prisoner who talked over a PA system, telling the Nips to come out. Still nothing happened. So in went some men, and later out came three Nips, bowing every step. We returned to camp.

AGANA

On July 31 amtanks of Companies C and D were moved up to support the 3d Marines in the advance northward to take Agana, the principal town on Guam. Their chief responsibility was to guard the beaches against night counterattacks. On August 1

both companies were relieved of beach defense and assigned a bivouac in the ball park on the edge of Agana.

WILLIAM MOIR, Company D

We moved to positions atop Adelup Point, and from there to the far end of Agana, the capital town of Guam. Some of us went souvenir hunting there, and I got a few, but most of the time I spent on a machine gun set up on the beach. When we were released, we set up a bivouac area in a ball field outside Agana.

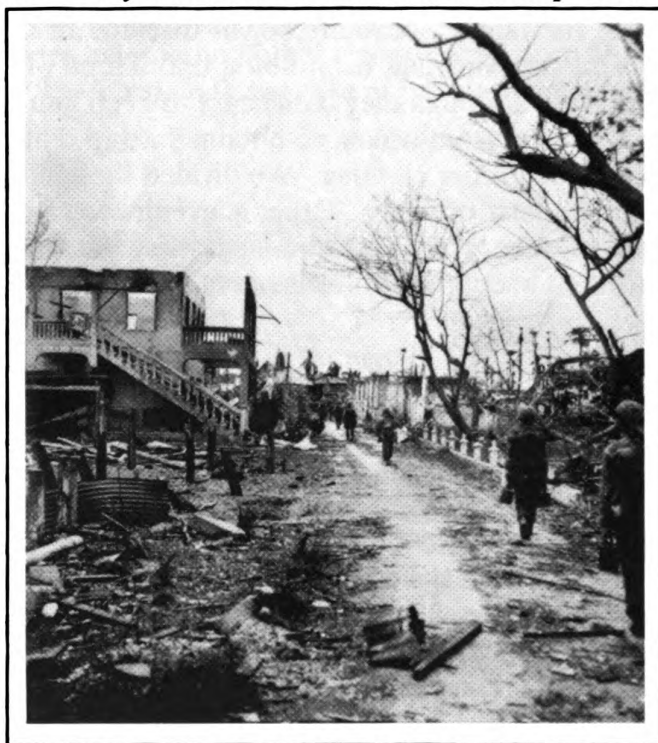
GEORGE F. ROBERTS, Company D

After a few days we moved up through the town of Agana, supporting the infantry and engineers of the 3d Marine Division. They must have carried so much explosives with them that they didn't need much support and, besides, the Navy LCIs had made runs on the town all the night before with 40mm and 20mm fire. We heard some Marines blew up a bank safe.

One tank crew told us later that they had liberated a big crate of sake bottles packed in straw. They crammed them down through the machine gun well and then got orders to move up. When they finally got around to checking out their goods, they discovered that all the bottles had fuses sticking out of them and quickly got the whole deal out of the tank.

C. L. WHITLOCK, Company D

At the Agana ball field, one Marine—I think it was Earl P. Hanley—found a bunch of stringy looking stuff he thought might be spaghetti. But after it caught fire and burned him pretty bad, we decided it was some kind of gunpowder.



*Agana, the capital of Guam, as the Marines found it.
(USMC)*

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

In the villages in our area there was utter destruction, with nothing left for the civilian population. When we got to Agana, I couldn't believe the complete devastation of the city. Absolutely nothing was left standing as I remember.

GUARDING THE III CORPS COMMAND POST

On August 4 a platoon of Company B amtanks was sent to enhance the security of the command post of the III Amphibious Corps. This was light duty, but the platoon was not relieved till August 11, just before the First Armored embarked to leave Guam.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

On August 4, B-3 and four other tanks were called about ten miles from our camp to set up a defense, using the tanks, around the headquarters of the III Amphibious Corps. Lots of high ranking officers were here, the highest being a general. Detached from our battalion for six days, all we did during the day was read, write letters, and do much of nothing, but at night we stood guard duty. We had lots of chances for souvenir hunting. Every day three members of the squad left for the hills, leaving the remainder with the tank. Souvenirs began to come in thick and fast as places were discovered where the Nips had been holed up. Three of my buddies even brought in a Jap as a prisoner, although they didn't care to keep him for a souvenir. A Jap quartermaster was discovered, from which we obtained a Jap tent to set up and live in, about 600 pairs of socks, and other clothing. We divided these up, and I got three sets of shorts and shirts and 40 pairs of socks. Other souvenirs were rifles, battle flags, Nambu machine guns, sabers, sake, fruit juices, money, wrist watches, and pictures. On August 11 we were ordered back to our bivouac area.

LAST DAYS ON GUAM

With Orote Peninsula secured by July 29, and the offensive against the remnants of Japanese forces having moved to the north, First Armored men gradually found time to look around at their new environment. The ravages of war were everywhere, but the friendliness of the people of Guam relieved some of its grimness. They seemed genuinely glad the Americans had returned. Even before the Battalion was reunited in a single camp, we began to enjoy a few amenities, such as fresh water showers, hot meals, and mail call. We even managed to tune radio sets to popular American music even though it was provided by Tokyo Rose.

JAMES C. CHANDLER, Company B

One day I went up in the hills and into one of the big Jap gun emplacements. This one had a field of fire of at least five miles of beach and on out to sea. It had just a narrow opening and was well fortified.

One morning I was walking where the front lines had been the night before. A young Marine was lying in a machine gun emplacement. He appeared to be asleep, but upon closer examination I saw there was a very small spot on his forehead where he had been shot. I can never forget how peaceful he looked.

We pulled into a place where we had to stay a day or two. There were maybe

thirty or forty dead Japs lying around, their bodies beginning to swell. They were in an area that had been worked over by flamethrowers. To cover them up we had to grab a leg or an arm to pull them into a large shell hole, and a handful of skin would slide off into our hands. It was a grisly task.

I had grown a beard aboard ship and, on the fifth day on Guam, Lieutenant Edgar S. Carlson saw me and asked, "Didn't I tell you to shave off that beard before we left the ship? You have thirty minutes to get rid of it." I found an old rusty Jap razor and an old pair of scissors, and in thirty minutes my beard was gone. But my face looked like a piece of raw steak.

ROBERT W. PIERCE, Company A

As the enemy was forced back into the hills, we had the run of the beach and did some souvenir hunting and looking over the ruins of small towns. We found some watches, flags, samurai swords, field phones, photos, and other things. About two weeks after W-Day we got our first hot meal. The chief cook was a very popular man at that time.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

Our area was loaded with flies. They were aggressive little buggers, just wouldn't shoo. The bad part was that they would swarm over enemy dead, then land on us or our food when we were eating. It was quite terrible.

One evening while there was a quiet session, I rigged a two-wire cable from the TCS intercom to an intercom speaker I had taken with me into my foxhole. I tuned in shortwave station KGEI in San Francisco, and a few of us got to listen to a program called "Meet the Girlfriend." We heard "Drinking Rum and Coca Cola" by the Andrews Sisters and other popular songs of the time. We could also hear Tokyo Rose and her propaganda broadcasts. The propaganda was lousy, but the songs were pretty modern American songs. Some of the men were a bit disturbed with the broadcasts.

In one area we ran into a civilian cemetery which was pretty well blown apart. Graves were blasted open and the remains in view. We found out later that the enemy had been using the cemetery as a headquarters.

One thing about the people of Guam. They sure were neat and clean considering the circumstances. I was surprised to see one family in fresh, clean clothes and others just about as clean. I don't know how they did it.

We set up a Battalion camp in a village called Piti. There we had an opportunity to take a shower in a makeshift arrangement set up by the Seabees. Before then our washing consisted of baths in the ocean. Those Seabees were all right. We had a saying in the Corps: "Don't hit that Seabee; he might be some Marine's father."

THOMAS T. OYLER, Company C

Because of my injury in the landing, I spent some time with the Battalion command post after that. I remember that great chow was put out in Company C because we had an excellent supply source. Quite often the truck convoys on the road to the rear of our camp were stalled. Ralph L. Palmer and several friends would climb up on the bed of a truck and throw off the most desirable foodstuffs into the bushes. Even the General came down for food one night.

RALPH E. HAUTH, Company A

We met a native on Guam, riding on a buffalo. He had on a shirt with red, white and blue stripes saying "GLAD SEE AGAIN."

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

While the 1st Platoon was away guarding the III Amphibious Corps command post, we again moved our bivouac area. There we enjoyed sitting by the road watching the Chamorros go by as they came from the hills. They waved and shouted to us, and we threw candy and cigarettes to them. They were sure glad we had finally returned and, when the opportunity arose to converse, some interesting and some unbelievable stories were told. For over two years they had been living in the boondocks or working in the fields for the Nips, for which in return they were given one meal during their 12-hour day. For the first time since December 1941 they were grinning and cheerful. They had never lost faith in their Uncle Sammy and managed to express themselves pretty well in this song, which would have made them most unpopular with their Japanese oppressors:

My dear Uncle Sam,
 Early Monday morning, they all threw their bomb.
 Eight of December in nineteen forty one.
 O Uncle Sam, Sam, my dear Uncle Sam,
 I want you please come back to Guam.
 Eight of December they all threw their bomb,
 Thirteen of December, when they surrender Guam,
 Plane are in hangar, pilot were on hand,
 Ship were in the harbor, to fortify our land.
 I didn't like sake. I like Canadian.
 I didn't like Nippon. It's better American.

When the 1st Platoon came back from guarding the III Amphibious Corps headquarters, they were loaded down with souvenirs. They had everything from Jap clothing (including some 600 pairs of socks) to a Nambu machine gun. Paul L. Harris also had a dog, a little larger than my dog Nipper, which he named Vic. I guess Vic was shell-shocked, for he acted very crazy.

C. L. WHITLOCK, Company D

In the first part of August we were on beach defense until about the 12th. One day a lady came running through our tanks yelling, "Rock-Rock, Rock-Rock." Nobody knew what she meant. She was looking for Sergeant Hudson E. Rodrock, who had been on Guam during peace time. He must have known her. I also remember little kids with handmade American flags who sang:

"Sam, Sam, dear old Uncle Sam,
Won't you please come back to Guam."

DALE L. BARKER, Company D

At our last camp two teenage Chamorro boys, Cecil and David, began hanging around, perhaps for the food, perhaps just for adventure. We found them and their stories interesting. One sidelight of the occupation was that when the Americans governed Guam, the Chamorros tended to give their children Spanish names. With the coming of the Japanese, many of them switched to English names for their children. According to them—and I haven't found any confirmation for this—the Japanese had a system for dealing with married American prisoners on Guam. An American couple would be shipped off to Japan. An American woman married to a native could stay on Guam with her husband. But an American male married to a Chamorro woman was sent to Japan without his wife, and she was kept behind on the island.

EXPLORING FOR SIGHTS AND SOUVENIRS

Some of the more adventurous—or maybe just restless—who were not limited to camp by duty assignments, went exploring the island to see the sights or to collect souvenirs. Thanks to the Japanese insistence on fighting to the death, enemy weapons and personal gear were plentiful, and easy to find. The urge to take home souvenirs of their war experiences is understandable and, in some men, was very strong.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

On August 4 Johnnie "Pat" Greene and I went up to Agat to visit with the civilians. By that time we had met a few, and some of those girls were beautiful. Pat and I had both befriended a little Chamorro boy named Jesús—Zoose for short—who had constantly hung around. Since we would have had trouble with the MPs if we had gone up on the hill where the natives' camp had been set up, Zoose helped us make contact with some of the girls: Rose Underwood, who had gone to school back in the States, María Montez, and two others, both named Ann.

EDWARD G. RIZKALLA, Company C

I remembered a cave, about a hundred yards to the left of our foxhole where Japs had fired a cannon. Someone had called for a flamethrower, and I saw a tank pull up

and fire the flame into the cave. The next day, when things had got a little quiet, I went over and looked into the cave. As I looked way back to the rear of the cave, I saw what looked like a saber. I had heard that Japanese sabers were ruby- and diamond-studded and, though it was dark in the cave, I started in there to get that one as a souvenir. Half way in, the smell of burnt flesh was so bad I had to leave. But I didn't give up. I went back, got my gas mask, put it on, and went all the way to the back of the cave. And there it was—a piece of wood.

JAMES C. CHANDLER, Company B

We went up to Agana, the capital of Guam, and went by a church that had been shelled or bombed. Only one wall was standing, with the cross on top of it. Looking up, the cross was vividly outlined against the early morning sun. There are some peaceful things you can never forget.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

Paul H. Dotur and I wanted to look around and hunt for souvenirs. We got out on the Old Agat Road and waited for a "six-by" truck to come along and hitched a ride. We rode the truck through Agana and, when the road split, took the left, went about two miles, and then got off. We were in a heavily forested area, about a third of the way down in a valley, with a vertical cliff on our right side. There were caves in the cliff, and we entered one cautiously. The ceiling was about ten feet high, the room about 15 feet by 30 feet. There were no Japs there, dead or alive. It must have been a command post or something similar, for there were papers and clothing and crude desks scattered all over. The floor was covered with stuff. We were poking through it when we heard something outside the cave. We looked at one another and quickly drew our .45s and unsheathed our Kabar knives. We both desperately wished we had brought our carbines along as well. Cocking the .45s, we approached the entrance very quietly. When we again heard something move, Dotur stepped outside, ready to do bodily harm. Our enemy was a huge toad that took a hop every once in a while. We both heaved big sighs of relief, and from that moment on, Paul's nickname in A Company was "Toad" Dotur.

Paul may have had misgivings about further snooping, or he may have wanted to look elsewhere. Anyway, we split up, and I continued to look over the debris on the cave floor. I spotted a Jap pistol holster and thought I had hit the jackpot. I looked it over carefully, making sure there were no wires or anything connected to it. I didn't want to get blown to hell by a booby trap. It was okay, so I picked it up and was very disappointed to find the pistol missing from it. I then started a thorough search for the pistol. As I moved through the cave, carefully turning papers and clothes over with my Kabar, I looked down at my right foot. It was planted right next to a big, black, ugly mine! It was wired or tied to two boards in the form of a cross. I about vomited. That was too much for me. I exited the cave, hiked to the road, and started walking back towards Agana. I soon got a ride which took me a couple of miles past Agana. As the

truck was going to turn there, I got off.

While waiting for another truck, two Chamorros, a man and a woman, came out of the jungle, both about twenty years old. The man noticed the two pistol holsters I was wearing, as I had fastened the Jap one to my belt also. He told me he knew where some Japs were and that, if I let him use one of the pistols, we'd go get them. I didn't like that suggestion one darn bit, for many obvious reasons. The girl wore men's clothing, but it was very noticeable she was indeed a girl. She was very voluptuous, and about the top four buttons of her shirt were open. She smiled so sweetly while I was telling her companion I was not interested in taking on a Japanese platoon while armed with a pistol and a Kabar knife.

On our next foray for souvenirs, three of us again went past Agana, but took the right fork when the road split. We came to a pretty nice looking home, somewhat damaged, with a field of pineapples growing next to it. We entered the house, checking it out for Japs, but no one was in it. We saw a glass-covered display case with Catholic religious items in it, but didn't disturb anything there. We went outside to examine the pineapples, as none of us had ever seen them growing before. As we were looking them over, two or three rifles started shooting at us. Leaving valor behind, we took off, running in zigzag fashion, as fast as we could. We ran through the fields, down a slope, and into high grass, way over our heads and very thick. Suddenly a couple of us stepped into algae-covered water right up to our necks. Crawling out, we again plunged through the grass, finally coming out on the opposite side. We came to another dirt road after a while and were lucky to have a truck come along. We didn't really know where we were, but the truck got us back to the Agat area. That completed my exploring on Guam.

DENGUE AND DEPARTURE

Even before the Battalion set up its last camp just south of Agat, some men were coming down with a disabling disease none of them had heard of before. Dengue (or dengue fever, or breakbone fever) is caused by the aedes mosquito and produces headaches, severe joint pain, and a rash. Before the Battalion embarked on August 12 to leave Guam, it was racked by an epidemic of dengue.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

It was a good thing our activities had decreased because most of the Battalion came down with dengue (breakbone) fever. We had been told that there was no malaria, so we paid little heed to the mosquitos. The cure was simple—drink a lot of water, and time. There were no known medicines for dengue.

WILLIAM D. GERMAIN, Company A

It seems we all came down with dengue fever. I had had malaria several times, and I think dengue was worse if that is possible.

In reply
refer to no.
1355-40
015/129

FIRST PROVISIONAL MARINE BRIGADE
FLEET POST OFFICE, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.

2 August, 1944

From: The Commanding General.
To: The Commanding Officer, 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion
(Det.HqCo, Co's A and B).
Via: The Commanding General, III Phib Corps.

Subject: Appreciation of services.

1. Upon detachment from the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, I wish to express to the officers and men of the 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion my sincere appreciation for their excellent performances of duty while serving under my command.

2. The conspicuous action of the crews of the armored LVTs leading the assault waves while crossing the reef under heavy fire from concealed enemy emplacements made possible the establishment of the initial beachhead ashore. Proceeding inland the armored amphibians assisted assault elements in their advance to the Regimental objectives and continued in support of the infantry until arrival of the tanks. During subsequent days units of your command aided materially the cleaning out of pockets of resistance along the shores of the Orote Peninsula.

3. The conduct of the personnel of Companies A and B, 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion under your leadership during the current operation was in keeping with the highest traditions of the Marine Corps.

S/ LEMUEL C. SHEPHERD, Jr.

7/188-jg HEADQUARTERS, III AMPHIBIOUS CORPS, IN THE FIELD

From: The Commanding General.
To: The Commanding Officer, 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion
(Det HqCo, Co's A and B)>

Subject: Appreciation of services.

1. Forwarded with pleasure and congratulations.

2. The Commanding Officer, 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion (Det HqCo, Co's A and B), is directed to place a copy of this letter in the service record book of each enlisted man and to attach a copy to the next fitness report of himself and each of his officers.

S/ ROY S. GEIGER

Letter of commendation to H&S Company detachment and Companies A and B

EARL M. HILL, Company B

The Guam environment was memorably miserable for the Marines of the First Armored. Frequent rain added to our difficulties and discomfort. The ground inshore of the coral beaches was composed of a sticky red gumbo that stuck to and built up on shoes and tank treads. Millions of persistent and seemingly tame flies infested bloated bodies on the battlefield and from there settled directly on our food as we tried to eat it. Some of us contracted such tropical diseases as dengue fever, courtesy of the aedes mosquito.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

After about 16 days on Guam the Battalion set up a camp at Agat. Lieutenant Milton B. Curtis was transferred to A Company as they had a heavy loss of officers. Andy (Andrew A.) Norton, the gunner on D-12, came down with dengue fever, and I came down with dysentery. A corpsman gave me a spoonful of paregoric, which tasted so good, like licorice, that I asked for another spoonful. No way. He told me it was habit forming.

GEORGE F. ROBERTS, Company D

About this time a bunch of us got the Marianas Quickstep, that lasted for upwards of a week and was very unpleasant. I also had dengue fever for almost a week aboard ship on the return trip to Guadalcanal and was half out of my head for a while.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

On August 6 we moved from the northern beaches near Adelup Point to the Agat beaches where A & B Companies of the First Armored had made their landings. All Battalion equipment was then in this new area, and we set up a maintenance tent. All the available mechanics started to repair our tanks. I began to get sick from dengue fever. On August 8 I made a memo showing the condition of Company D maintenance men: Corporal John P. Murphy, killed in action; PFC Don C. Neal, evacuated with burn wounds; Sergeant Frank F. Wesson, recuperating from burns; Sergeant Warren R. Beeson, dengue fever; Corporal John M. Nemeth, dengue; Corporal Harry L. Paul, dengue; Staff Sergeant Arthur W. King, combat fatigue.

In the last days on Guam we got a radio hook-up throughout the Company area and heard the first radio broadcast from Saipan. A lot of the men by then were sick with dengue. We continued to work repairing the tanks, but a lot of them had to be surveyed. On August 10 the island was declared secured, and we were given orders to be ready to board ship the next day.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

On 10 August the island was declared secured except for some mopping up. Of the estimated 18,500 Japanese troops on the island, 10,971 enemy bodies were counted.

FIRST ARMORED AMPHIBIAN BATTALION CASUALTIES IN THE GUAM INVASION

Killed in Action ***H&S Company**

PFC Cecil E. Larsen

Wounded in Action **

PFC David W. Drexel

Sgt Louis P. Puder

Capt James A. C. Patrick

COMPANY A**Killed in Action ***

PFC Robert E. Allison
PFC William Blatzheim
Corp Freeman N. Bousman
PFC Eugene P. Brady
PFC James E. Braunn
Corp Cecil L. Crimm

PFC Donald J. Fiedler
Pvt Harry D. Frank
PFC Howard W. Hayes
Sgt LeRoy F. Hesse
Capt Owen P. Lillie
PFC Thomas R. O'Meara

PFC Joseph P. O'Neill
PFC Dean R. Petersen
Corp Bruce A. Rylott
Sgt Irwin G. Saville
PFC Gerardo E. Serrone

Wounded in Action **

Sgt Paul R. Brema
PFC James M. Critchfield
Corp Ernest L. Davenport
2d Lt Robert A. Fish
1st Lt Thomas J. Garfield
PFC Richard H. Koesel
2d Lt Wiley W. Loughmiller

PFC Robert G. Matheny
Gy Sgt Daniel H. Maynard
PFC William M. Mulligan
PFC Douglas W. Nash
PFC Herbert E. Priest
PFC John L. Scott
Sgt Gerald A. Shippee

PFC Jerome P. Sikora
Corp Durward B. Smith
Corp Thomas M. Speck
Corp John Henry Wilson
PFC John L. Witherspoon
Sgt Frank R. Wortek
Sgt Michael Zadarosni

COMPANY B**Killed in Action ***

Sgt Ervin P. Bodewig
PFC George P. Buchanan

PFC Rudolph G. Heibel
1st Lt Calvin E. McClain

PFC Ralph N. McCrory

Wounded in Action **

Corp Edward E. Boling
PFC Leland K. DeLauer
PFC Nolon M. Doss
Sgt Clement H. Dunlap

Plat Sgt Harvey B. Evans
Corp Orval C. Grissom
Corp Hilbert G. Harbke
PFC Henry A. Kozlowski

Corp Edward W. Kitson
PFC Ronald J. La Forge
PFC Robert D. Pittman
Corp Joseph C. Wilson

COMPANY C**Killed in Action ***

PFC Billy J. Christian

Sgt Henry Zweigel

Wounded in Action **

PFC Zeldien J. Christensen
PFC Forest F. Cutright
1st Lt William L. Eubank
1st Lt Harold O. Grothem
PFC Wallace D. Harwood

Sgt Elmer D. Heppner
PFC Leonard S. Larson
PFC James C. McDaniel
Corp Merlin K. Miller
PFC William G. Olinger

1st Lt Thomas T. Oyler
Pvt George I. Rock
Corp James M. Sallis
PFC Gerald L. Thompson

COMPANY D**Killed In Action***

PFC George P. Christopoulos
PFC Wayne J. King

PFC George W. Lybarger
Sgt Nickolas A. Manfred

Corp John P. Murphy
Pvt Howard H. Zitnik

Wounded In Action**

Sgt George B. Engelmann
PFC George W. Frye
Gy Sgt John W. Frye
PFC Cletus M. Gilleland
Corp Lester W. Hanson

Corp John F. Kelly
Corp Robert M. Lytton
PFC Don C. Neal
PFC Jesse B. Oswalt
Corp Orville E. Pennington

PFC Charles C. Smithson
Sgt George H. Thomas
Corp Albert R. Thompson
Sgt Frank F. Wesson

*Includes "Died of Wounds" and "Missing in Action."

**Includes "Battle Fatigue."

Many bodies had been sealed in caves or were lost in the jungle. Some Japanese were able to survive in the dense jungle. Only a few prisoners were taken.

WILLIAM MOIR, Company D

We moved from the Agana ball field to a semi-permanent camp south of Piti, down near where A and B Companies of the First Armored hit with the First Provisional Brigade, and stayed there for about a week. Many of us caught dengue fever there. We moved off Guam on August 12 at about 1200. I thought Guam was probably a nice island, but while we were there, it was the rainy season and everything was mud. We saw quite a few natives, who seemed to be friendly, nice people. They were glad to see us and told us awful tales about the Japs.

ASSESSMENT

There has never been any doubt of the strategic necessity and value of seizing Saipan, Tinian, and Guam in the prosecution of the war. Guam was quickly converted into a huge naval base, and all three islands became bases for the giant B-29s of the Army Air Force. Guam not only gave the Navy an advance base for operations northward toward Japan, but also shut off Japanese shipping which might otherwise have supplied or rescued troops isolated on remote islands. Bombing by the B-29s carried the war to the Japanese homeland on a massive scale. The loss of the strategically important Marianas, the loss of 50,000 combatants, and the loss of air power in the Philippine Sea engagement were also a psychological blow to Japan's leaders. From that point on, the government, the military, and the general population in Japan were gripped by a growing conviction that the war could not be won.

The contribution to the invasion by Companies A and B, and the Headquarters detachment with them, was recognized officially by General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Commanding General of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade. As an expression of appreciation, the general issued a letter commending them, a copy of which was to be placed in

each enlisted man's service record and each officer's next fitness report.

Over 1700 Americans died in the Guam invasion, and about 6000 were wounded. In the tables on the two preceding pages we have identified 31 men of the First Armored Amphibian Battalion killed, and 64 injured. Published statistics agree that 31 men were killed, but, perhaps because of differences in procedures for counting, the figure for the injured ranges from 61 men to 66. The Guam casualties were the highest for the Battalion in its two years of service in the Pacific War.



Surrender leaflet, Japanese text on one side, English on the other, found on a dead Japanese soldier by Melvin A. Greulich of H&S Company and a grave registrar attached to H&S Company as together they searched caves for wounded and dead Marines.. (Greulich)

CHAPTER

TEN

From Guam to Guadalcanal

The First Armored Amphibian Battalion had taken two months to go to Guam. The return trip to Guadalcanal took only two weeks. Having accumulated a substantial amount of shipboard time, we felt we were old salts and, indeed, we frequently found we had more time at sea than the ships' crews we traveled with. We sailed from Guam in late afternoon on August 12, 1944, lay over at Eniwetok two or three days for supplies, and arrived off Tetere Beach on August 27. As of that date, by one calculation, we had logged since leaving San Diego, 129 days afloat, only 111 days ashore.

The LSTs on this return trip were no longer overloaded with infantry, weapons, ammunition, and other essentials for invading hostile shores. On board were only amtank and amtrac men and such of their vehicles as had not been lost in battle. There was room for movement about the ship, playing a little catch on the weather deck, even setting up a movie screen.

Many, however, were unable to avail themselves of these amenities. That voyage is remembered most for the grievous epidemic of dengue which afflicted—it seemed—over half the Battalion. Many men were sick before we boarded the LSTs, and others were stricken soon afterward. Most were better by the time the ships put in at Eniwetok, and practically all had recovered before we went ashore to our old camp on Guadalcanal.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

On August 12, two days after the island was declared secure, we embarked on LSTs and APAs and headed back to Guadalcanal. With our casualties being fairly heavy, and many still sick with dengue fever, we had no regrets on departing Guam.

WILLIAM MOIR, Company D

From Guam, we headed for Guadalcanal on LST 24, manned by the Coast Guard. We thought the 1st Marine Division was waiting for us for another invasion. It seemed this outfit we were in, the First Armored Amphibian Battalion, was the first wave for all the landings. With the law of averages in mind, we weren't happy with these thoughts. I still had dengue fever and, along with it, a case of dysentery. Most of the fellows slept topside; I slept between a truck and a jeep. I wrote letters home and played cards with Charles T. Mellor, a nice fellow, who also had dysentery. On August 18 at 1400, we dropped anchor in Eniwetok Atoll, and by the 19th I was feeling better. Lieutenant Milton B. Curtis, our platoon leader, was transferred to A Company, and Lieutenant Theodore A. Burge, the Company executive officer, was now in charge of our platoon.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

On 12 August 1944 the entire D Company, or what was left of it, boarded an LST manned by the Coast Guard. Boy! How lucky could I get? No sooner did I get aboard than, whammo, I came down with dengue fever, along with about half of D Company. I was lucky it held off till I got aboard the ship. One area of the LST was set aside as a sick bay and was pretty well occupied. No Marine wounded were aboard though, as they normally were transferred to hospital ships. I was given a bunk, and a corpsman started to feed me juices, mostly orange and tomato. I had a temperature of 104, though it didn't feel that high. Those corpsmen were all right. They seemed concerned and really took good care of us.

En route to the Solomons we put into Eniwetok for a few days. A movie area was provided aboard, and there was a show when the sun went down. I felt pretty good and decided to slip out of sick bay and go topside for the movie. I wasn't there very long before the corpsman found me and hauled my butt back below to sick bay. He took my temperature, which was still at about 102. He gave me some cold juice and told me to stay put. So much for the movie session.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

On LST 221 we brought back from Guam only seven B Company tanks out of the eighteen we had taken in. None of the tanks we left there had been knocked out in combat, but they were in bad condition. Only B-2 and our tank, B-3, were left out of six tanks in the 1st Platoon.

Chow aboard ship was swell, the best we had eaten in a long time. I spent most of my time reading, playing cards, writing letters, or doing nothing. We did have rifle inspection and some guard. The ship played recordings on loudspeakers at certain times every day, mostly at meal times. The record they played most often was "You Betcha My Life," with Bonnie Baker singing. It became known as the anthem of LST 221.

We lay over at Eniwetok from August 18 to 21 to take on supplies and water, and fuel from a tanker, but couldn't go ashore. We made a lot of deals with sailors on the

oil tanker swapping Japanese souvenirs for wrist watches, cigarette lighters, fountain pens, etc.

Out of Eniwetok Lieutenant Irwin Ronald Buckner said we could write letters home saying we were aboard ship and headed for our old base. We could also send Jap pictures, money, and postcards in the mail. On August 23 I had guard on the tank deck from 1200 to 1600. On the 24th the ship had to stop for half an hour to repair a motor. On the 25th I started the tank motor and ran it for about 15 minutes. We reached Guadalcanal on August 27.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

On LST 24, a Coast Guard ship, we had all of Company D, plus a few 4th Amtrac Battalion men. The corpsmen were kept plenty busy with patients sick with dengue fever. All the men took it easy. They looked like a different group of men from those who went over these same sea-lanes a month before. They looked much older, were tired, and had no pep at all. About the only time anyone moved was for chow or to wash up at the designated water hours of 0700-0800, 1100-1200, and 1600-1700. Most of the fellows slept topside because it was too hot below decks.

Some of the men were feeling better by the time we dropped anchor at 1430 on Friday, August 18, in the Eniwetok lagoon. There were a plenty of ships there. We were at Eniwetok only three days, taking on supplies, but we had movies aboard ship in the evenings, and I went ashore to church on Sunday morning. We stayed ashore until 1430 that Sunday and thought the islands had really been fixed up nice. We left Eniwetok on August 21, weighing anchor at 0630.

From Eniwetok to Guadalcanal we had only four LSTs and two subchasers in our convoy. Most of the men were feeling okay once again. We had a radio hook-up on the jeep to give us the latest news and music at night. On August 25, we had to turn in all books to the ship's library. We sighted land on August 26, and after an early noon chow, left the ship at 1600 on August 27.

BYRON G. SNEVA, Company C

From Guam to Guadalcanal we were on LST 986, and it was great. It was a new ship, it had a good skipper, the chow was wonderful, and the crew was friendly. They played music several hours a day over loudspeakers. Only Company C of the 1st Armored and six amtracs from the 4th Amphibian Tractor Battalion were aboard, but quite a few of us still had to sleep topside in hammocks, cots, etc. Some of us used lumber stored topside to make shacks. The weather deck looked like a boom town. No gear was topside, so we had plenty of room to play catch, etc. In the evening there was a movie, then music for an hour or so. All the guys were happy as heck. We thought we were in paradise.

A lot of the boys were still bed-ridden with dengue fever, and on August 14, I began to come down with it, getting chills and fever and a nosebleed. I was pretty sick,

very bad for about three days. We pulled into Eniwetok on Friday, August 18, and that was where we were when I got better and was able to get out of my sack.

I went ashore once at Eniwetok, had seven bottles of ice-cold Duquesne beer, and watched a softball game. They had quite a place fixed up there, with four ball fields, a nice beach, and a huge, but still unfinished, PX. The officers really had a swell place on another island, called Eniwetok Club. We left Eniwetok on the morning of August 21 and headed south for Guadalcanal.

On Wednesday, August 23, we crossed the equator. On the good ship LST 986 King Neptune had his day, and polliwogs got their welcome to the other side of the world. Polliwog officers served chow to all of us shellbacks. We ate first, had the swabbies sweep the deck, danced, had a big water fight, and had a lot of fun. Crossing the equator for the third time, we felt salty.

At 0900 the next day, Davy Jones came aboard and held court for all the polliwogs. Boy! Did we beat 'em up! We cut their hair, made them eat flour and shaving soap, and made them drink what looked like orange juice but was made from dissolved atabrine and salt water. Then they were given a gentle rub and massage with paint and graphite grease, applied also to their heads. After that they were dunked and nearly drowned in a briny pool. Finally they were given a working over with belts, paddles and fire hoses as they crawled the last fifty feet of their torture. It was great sport, and only a few took it the wrong way. We sure laid it on the officers! That court lasted four hours. The ship's baker made big cakes for the occasion, with a big frosted King Neptune on each. The day ended in a flaming sunset, and all had a great day, forgetting the rest of the world.

On August 26 we cleaned up the whole ship in preparation for leaving the next day. We didn't really mind as it had been a swell trip on that ship. Late in the afternoon we began to see smudges of land off the starboard bow and knew we were close to our home for over there. That evening Jim (James W.) Graham and I watched a beautiful sunset over the distant land. It was just like a dream, that nobody could ever paint. There was too much of it and it had every color. The big billowy clouds that rose up to tremendous columns over the islands changed color faster than one could paint them. In such an atmosphere Jim and I talked of what we were going to do, and about our women, and everything. Even before the last color of the sunset had faded, the moon flooded everything with its light. I smoked a cigar, and hit the sack.

On Sunday, August 27, we arrived at Guadalcanal. Still aboard ship we had ham and eggs for breakfast, and ham, pie and ice cream at noon. After moving up and down the beach all afternoon, the ramp was finally lowered at 1600, and we scrambled aboard tractors and tanks and set out for the last 500 yards of our trip. The camp sure looked quiet and peaceful, but soon it was like a freshly turned up ant hill, with Marines running all over with all their equipment, looking for the right tent, for sacks, for everything. We had mail call, but they got through only six of the fourteen bags. After chow we tried to get things squared away for the night, even working by moonlight.

CHAPTER
ELEVEN

Guadalcanal the Second Time

Strange as it seems, returning to our primitive camp on pestilential Guadalcanal was a little like coming home. Everyone was tired, felt older, and were stressed out by memories of grim scenes and events. The prospect of relaxing, resting, and restoring energy in a familiar environment with familiar routines was most welcome. A program of rest and rehabilitation was in fact allowed for two weeks, before training schedules were resumed. The men were glad to again get mail from home, regular meals, movies, and freshwater showers. Some work was necessary, such as squaring away tents and personal gear, washing clothes, guard duty, and inspection routines. Official business included assessing losses, inventorying equipment, reorganizing depleted units, and catching up on paper work.

There were surprises. While the combat units had been away for the Guam operation, a new Battalion galley and mess hall had been built. We also discovered that much of our rear echelon had been drafted into a new amtank unit, the Third Armored Amphibian Battalion, formed for an invasion of Peleliu, one of the Palau Islands. Except for the long postponement of the Guam landings, Peleliu would have fallen to the First Armored. The Third Armored was formed quickly when our return to Guadalcanal was delayed.

Our second stay on Guadalcanal, from August 27, 1944, to March 12, 1945, was a time of recovery, reorganization, and preparation for the next combat operation. Guam casualties, other losses of personnel, and losses of equipment were replaced by new men and new equipment. The most important development in that period was the replacement of our old LVTA-1s, with their 37mm cannons, by a new amtank model, the LVTA-4, armed with a 75mm howitzer. Because the howitzer had indirect fire capabilities, the Battalion would assume, in addition to its assault mission, a new role as an artillery force. Intensive artillery training, therefore, became a top-priority activity in our last months on Guadalcanal.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

Believe me it was swell to get back to the old camp, that first afternoon, on August 27. I hardly recognized it after an absence of almost three months. A new combined galley and mess hall had been built where the old one stood. We got our same old Company B area and our same tents. We had mail call starting at 1700, but there was so much mail, they had to discontinue at dark and wait till the next day to give out the rest of it. I got 30 letters the first day and 25 the second day, some of them dated as far back as April. I took a freshwater shower, which sure beat those saltwater showers aboard ship. In the evening I went to a movie, the first one in about three months.

At general assembly the next day, August 28, Major Metzger complimented us on the good job we had done on Guam and said we could expect a couple more invasions ahead of us. He also said we wouldn't have much to do that first week back. I spent most of the day squaring away our tent and went to a show in the evening.

The first two weeks back on Guadalcanal we had rest and rehabilitation, with no regular schedule, except some guard duty and a few inspections and work details. We had mail calls and an issue of beer. I wrote letters and went to movies at the Battalion outdoor theater almost every evening. The company radios were connected to speaker boxes in the company streets, giving us the latest recordings of songs and radio programs. On Saturday afternoon, September 2, I went to the servicemen's center at Henderson Field for cigarettes, candy, etc. The place had been remodeled and sure looked swell. It was quite a large building, with a game room, a library, and a room for Ping-Pong. On September 4 we were told we could send home Japanese flags, books, and magazines if okayed by the censor, but not rifles, uniforms, etc. Later these were okayed too.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

As primitive as it was, it was good to be returning to our camp. I suppose we had become accustomed to the life and, after Guam, it appeared secure. We took a few days to "settle in," maintained equipment, and then slowly commenced our training. We remained on tropical hours, starting early in the morning and ceasing training at 1300. The heat was terrific. One could burn one's hand by just putting it on a sun-exposed piece of metal.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, COMPANY B

When we arrived at Camp McCartney on Guadalcanal, my little dog Nipper from Guam had been on board ship for so long, with no dirt, that she went berserk as soon as she was on the beach. She was happier than I. George Cash threw sand in her face, and she just loved it. It felt good to be back in the same old company area, the same tent, now full of mold and cobwebs. Nothing else had changed except for a new mess hall the rear echelon had built. At 1700 there was a much-awaited mail call. There was

so much mail they had to wait till the next day to finish giving it out. Reading our mail took precedence in importance, but I took a break for my fresh water shower, which sure beat hell out of the salt water showers aboard ship. I finished the mail, ate chow, and then went to a movie, the first one in about three months.

Nipper died on October 5, like the rest of the pups brought from Guam. I had to chloroform her. I felt sick.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

Many changes had been made in the old camp site, including a new mess hall, better than the one we had had in the States. At a general assembly on August 28, the day after our return, we were given time to square away our gear and begin a rest period. The maintenance crews, however, had to mix rest days with work days in the maintenance shed and tank park.

THE 3d ARMORED AMPHIBIAN BATTALION

Approximately 70 men were transferred from the 1st Armored's rear echelon when the new 3d Armored Amphibian Battalion and the 6th Amphibian Tractor Battalion were formed. They were a personal loss to friends but, as trained men, a functional loss also to the Battalion. They went to a bloody battle, in which the 3d Armored suffered about 110 casualties. PFC Francis W. Stockwell of the 1st Armored's B Company was one of those killed in action at Peleliu.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

When we arrived at our base camp on Guadalcanal, we found the reason for our early departure from Guam. Due to the delays caused by our being the floating reserve for the Saipan operation, we returned too late to be employed for the landing on Peleliu. As a result, during our absence, it had been decided by higher headquarters that our rear echelon would be used as a nucleus for the 3d Armored Amphibian Battalion, which was activated. In that process we lost some of our best mechanics and personnel. Few, if any, of us regretted missing Peleliu; it was a bitter fight and, with 20/20 hindsight, a completely useless operation. History will show there was no strategic or tactical reason to seize Peleliu and Angaur (the companion operation carried out by the U.S. Army). Casualties were heavy.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

The first thing we found was that our rear echelon had been drafted into the new 3d Armored Amphibian Battalion, formed while we were away. Only two rear echelon men were left in Company D. The 3d Armored serviced their tanks in our camp after their maneuvers and before they embarked for an invasion of Peleliu.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

On August 30 I met a boot camp buddy, Earl Lazendorfer. He and his brother, Claire, were in the new 3d Armored Amphibian Battalion, scheduled to take part in the Palau invasion.

TRAINING RESUMED

The Battalion was never allowed to relax for long. It was vital that everyone be physically fit and combat ready. On September 11, we resumed regular training, which included weapons instruction and range firing. Even though we did not expect to keep the LVTA-1s long, they were still useful for practice in formation driving in the water. The maintenance crews, of course, kept all vehicles running, and the CPs worked to keep amtank radios in operating condition.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

On September 11 we started a training schedule: close-order drill, informal guard mount practice, .30-caliber machine gun school, swimming, hikes, water and land driving, .45-caliber pistol school, M-1 rifle school, carbine school, 37mm cannon school, semaphore school, current events, etc. We were pretty expert on all the above, but had to keep busy and sharp. Every Wednesday and Saturday afternoon and all day Sunday were free.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

On Monday, September 11, rest and recuperation was over, and we started our regular training schedule, but still with a lot of afternoons off. We had classes and practice in infantry tactics, close-order drill, hikes, map reading, semaphore, chemical warfare, Jap mines and grenades, and combat swimming. We had lessons and firing practice with all our weapons, and talks on current events, Navy government, and military courtesy and discipline. We knew our A-1 tanks would be replaced, but we still kept them up and had school in tank maintenance and formation driving. To get ready for the new A-4s we had classes in artillery and the 75mm howitzer.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

Even though we would not keep the LVTA-1s very long, we worked to keep them in good condition—repairing tracks, pulling engines, overhauling "little Joe" generators, and even repairing a split hull on D-1.

NEW MEN IN THE BATTALION

The Battalion, of course, lost dozens of men at Guam. Other dozens were transferred out of the Battalion (we said "surveyed"), and perhaps sent home, soon after our return to Guadalcanal. Some of these, suffering from fatigue or neuroses, were virtual

battle casualties, though not so listed officially. Others were victims of tropical or other afflictions, such as skin diseases, lung diseases, malaria, and filariasis. The Battalion seriously needed replacements for the tanks and for technical specialties.

On October 12 a group of 77 men were transferred into the Battalion as replacements. On November 20 another 85 men joined from the 6th Amphibian Tractor Battalion, which had been formed for the Peleliu operation and then disbanded. Some of our Guam wounded, who had been evacuated to hospitals, were returned to duty with their old companies.

DALE L. BARKER, Company D

My notes show that after Guam we surveyed, for various ailments, fourteen men from D Company alone. I thought it particularly poignant to observe at morning formations how depleted some of the crews were. From Squad D-3 only one man, Cletus M. Gilleland, was present to answer roll call.

GEORGE LEGINO, Company B

About November 1944 I was put in the hospital on the Canal, was then flown to the New Hebrides, then to a Naval hospital in Noumea, New Caledonia. To my disappointment I found I would not be returning to our outfit. This was when I realized how important my buddies had become to me and was thinking I might not see them again. I was sent to Balboa Naval Hospital in San Diego and, when sufficiently recovered, was given leave to go home to Omaha. I was home 78 days, returned to the Balboa Naval Hospital, then was transferred to the Marine Corps base in San Diego, where I was discharged in June 1945.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

Gradually our losses in equipment and supplies were replaced, and Marine replacements arrived. Many were recruits right out of basic training, some came from other units, and a few were Marines released from federal prisons to go directly to combat units. The latter were on six months' probation, but much of that time had been used up in transit. After a welcome making it quite clear that any deviation from the expected high level of behavior would result in a rapid return to prison, they were sent to their assigned companies. Not one had a disciplinary problem. In fact, disciplinary problems were practically unknown in the Battalion.

TED "ZIP" SHEPPARD, Company D

On February 17, 1945, Robert M. Lytton, a swell guy, returned from hospital in Hawaii after recovery of wounds he received on Guam. He resumed his old job as tank commander of D-10. The next day Leo (Clarence L.) Whitlock on maneuvers with us smashed his foot in a ramp and was sent to the hospital for about three weeks.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

We had quite a few casualties up on Guam. Also, a few of the guys who had been overseas once before went home. One of these was my previous tank commander, Corporal Larry (George L.) Good, who had spent time fighting on Guadalcanal. Our beach assault, plus the close proximity to those 155mm howitzers which our artillery fired over us day and night for a few days on Guam, rattled Larry's nerves to the point that he was sent back to the States. In any case, Bob (Robert W.) Pierce and I had new buddies on the new A-10. Our driver was Private Eddie Dement. PFC Harry J. Broderick was the tank commander. PFC Joe (Joseph L.) Campbell was the 75mm gunner. Private Hank Pelzar was the third man in the turret as loader. Bob Pierce of course was the radio-man, and I was the ammo passer.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

One of our replacements after Guam was 2d Lieutenant Jim (James H.) Knox, who replaced Lieutenant Milton B. Curtis as platoon leader for the 3d Platoon. One Wednesday, while out on artillery practice, we really weren't operating up to snuff, and Lieutenant Knox passed the word that if we didn't shape up, we would be out there on Wednesday afternoon. Our platoon sergeant was Sergeant "Ski" (Edwin F.) Cieslak. He went up to the Lieutenant and said, "I don't know about the rest of the men, Lieutenant, but the Major gave me Wednesday afternoon off, and I'm taking it." Well, as things worked out, we did get the scheduled afternoon off. Lieutenant Knox turned out to be a good officer. Before he reported to the Battalion, he had done his homework on the LVTs. He knew as much about them as we did—probably more. He was also a good leader of men as we would find out.

ALBERT E. POWERS, Company D

My memories of the First Armored don't go back as far as most. I was a replacement transferred from the 6th Amphibs after the Peleliu campaign. I was assigned first to H&S Company and given the job, with another fellow, of spraying diesel fuel on that stream that ran along the back of the camp. That was supposed to help control mosquitos. We rowed around in a little two-man rubber raft. Shortly afterward I was transferred to D Company and put in D-14. This was Leo F. Nolan's tank.

ROBERT C. BARTHULI, Company D

I went into the Marine Corps on September 30, 1943. After completing boot camp on December 7, I was attached to Company A, 11th Amphibian Tractor Battalion at the Boat Basin. We boarded an LST at San Diego and participated in the Kwajalein campaign on January 31, 1944. From there we went to Pearl Harbor, stayed for several months, then sailed by way of the New Hebrides to Guadalcanal, where I joined the 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion. I was left behind with the rear echelon when the Battalion left for Guam. Orders came through to form the 6th Amphibian Tractor Battalion

on Pavuvu, and I was forced to join them there. In August 1944 we engaged the enemy at the island of Peleliu in support of the 1st Marine Division. We returned to Pavuvu where the 6th Amphibian Tractor Battalion was disbanded, and I was reassigned to the 1st Armored on Guadalcanal.

THE AWARD CEREMONY

On November 4, purple heart metals were presented to 38 First Armored men who had been wounded on Guam. The presentation ceremony was held on the Battalion ball field, McClain Field. Colonel Francis B. Loomis, logistics officer for the III

Passing in review after the awards ceremony, Camp McCartney, Guadalcanal, November 4, 1944. (Paul)



Amphibious Corps, made the presentations. The III Corps band was on hand for the occasion. After the awarding of medals, the Battalion passed in review.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

After two days of rehearsal, we gathered on Saturday, November 4, for a parade and the formal presentation of Purple Heart medals to First Armored men. In Company D George R. Smith, William B. Burrum, John W. Frye, George B. Engelmann, and Albert R. Thompson received medals. John F. Kelly had received his already in the hospital.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

We had converted a part of the huge level field of kunai grass behind our camp into a baseball diamond. Each day for weeks a work party would descend on it with

machetes to cut the grass. After it dried, piles of it would be set afire to get rid of it. Rakes, hoes, and shovels then went to work to remove humps and rocks and to smooth it. Eventually it was finished, and several games were played there.

On one bright, hot day we had a formal Battalion parade in the field. Purple Hearts and other decorations were handed out after we troops had stood at attention a long period. A couple of men near me passed out in ranks. Corporal George T. Bell received a Silver Star medal for his activity on the reef in our initial assault on Guam.

GEORGE F. ROBERTS, Company D

We held a ceremony in a nearby field to honor fallen comrades and award medals. I don't know where they got that little Marine band and the colors. They had half a dozen instruments and a big tuba that was more dents than horn. There we were at attention in our clean khakis, 4,000 miles from home and, when they played the "Star Spangled Banner," it brought tears to my eyes. I suspect I was not alone.

CAMP LIFE

Life the second time around on Guadalcanal was much like the first. Movies were still shown almost nightly at the Battalion theater. The local AFRS station still broadcast stateside programs from its "fungus-festooned studios in downtown Guadalcanal." There were still volleyball, swimming, and supervised physical conditioning. Baseball on the Battalion's own diamond was new. So was an American Red Cross club established not far from camp. Most of us rejoiced in beer and Coca-Cola issues, but a few brewed their own, more potent, beverages. Exotic wildlife still abounded. We still defended against mosquitos and took atabrine for malaria. And guard duty, mess duty, maintenance work, combat training, and inspections were relentlessly routine. There *were* some novel incidents which enlivened camp life then and have, since then, been retold at Battalion reunions.

In January 1945 promotion orders came through for a large number of First Armored personnel. Among them, some company commanders became captains, and a large number of PFCs received corporal stripes. The battalion commander, Major Louis Metzger, became Lt. Colonel Metzger.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

Camp life was a lot like our first time on Guadalcanal. There was a lot of rain, and I washed clothes a lot. We had mail calls, movies, regular Saturday inspections, several issues of beer, a couple of paydays, and some baseball and volleyball. I went to church services several times, and made trips out of camp to Henderson Field and other places on the island. George D. De Angelo and Don C. Neal rejoined the Company after being hospitalized for their wounds on Guam. I spent about two weeks setting up

a gasoline storage dump. I also got other jobs, like making base plates for the baseball field, painting names on tool boxes, and repairing burners in the galley.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

Recreation was limited: softball, volleyball, floating on the lagoon in rubber life rafts, letters from home which arrived only every so often, and movies in our coconut-log outdoor theater. Normally it rained, and the "exciter lamp" in our one projector burned out and we left in mid-movie. It really didn't matter as the movies were so old and so bad. Food improved only slightly. A Marine Corps laundry unit located near us, so that we no longer had to do laundry by boiling our dirty clothing with GI-issue lye soap, in half of a 55-gallon drum heated over an oil-fed fire. The Red Cross held a "dance" for our battalion; with about six women and one thousand Marines present, it was not a great success.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

We also had lots of inspections, and there were plenty of work details. I painted signs for the mess hall and other areas and painted checkerboards and girls on table tops in the recreation tent. Sometimes I spent my free time drawing.

For recreation I went swimming, played softball, and went to the movies almost every evening. I wrote a lot of letters. On some Saturdays I went to the service center at Henderson Field, but near the end of October a new American Red Cross club was set up about a half mile from camp. About six Red Cross women were in charge there and served coffee and sandwiches free from 1830 to 2030 daily. We had a few beer and Coca Cola issues.

[Editor's note: Stephen Marusky recorded in his diary the titles of more than a hundred movies shown at the Battalion theater in the period from September 1944 through February 1945. Most, but not all, were highly forgettable. There were more old movies than new. But when they were the only show in town, even the old and forgettable were well attended. See his list on the next page.]

ROBERT C. BARTHULI, Company D

I trained with the maintenance crews of D Company to help maintain the tanks. While cleaning the tank compartment, we were not permitted to smoke, but could chew, which I didn't do at the time. I was given a bite of "plug" to chew while performing my cleaning duties. After chewing awhile, the urge to relieve myself of the saliva was there. Unable to get out of the tank compartment fast enough, I ended up swallowing it, and became very sick. I finally jumped from the tank and rolled on the ground, never again to chew tobacco.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

We refueled the tanks in the tank park after being out in the boondocks with them. We'd manhandle a 55-gallon drum of gas up next to the tank, put a hose into the drum and a funnel into the gas tank filler opening on the tank's deck behind the turret. With a hand-operated pump we would then pump gas into the funnel leading to the vehicle's gas tank. One man would turn the crank, another would hold the hose into the funnel, and a third crew member always had to stand by, alertly, on top of the tank with a fire extinguisher in his hand, ready for action. I always thought that if there was a spark or a fire, there would be an immediate explosion and we would all be blown to kingdom come before the extinguisher could be triggered.

We didn't swim much at Teter beach because, with no coral reef, the ocean often swept in with waves that churned up the sand. We sometimes swam there when the sea was calm. Every once in a while a truckload of us would go east approximately three miles, down a narrow dirt road, to the Balesuna River. I don't remember how far inland our swimming hole was, but the river was dark and deep, and great. The water was cool and clean with jungle on both sides of its banks. The bank on the side we approached from the truck was high, and a thick rope had been fastened to a tree limb overhanging the river. We'd swing out over the water and then drop eight to ten feet into the river. It was fun. I've read since then that there were crocodiles and pythons on Guadalcanal.

MOVIES AT THE FIRST ARMORED THEATER**As recorded by Stephen Marusky**

Andy Hardy's Double Life. You Can't Ration Love. Old Acquaintances. Powers Girl. Sleepy Lagoon. Seven Days Ashore. Stage Door Canteen. Bermuda Mystery. Ice Capades. Uncertain Glory. Time to Kill. Saboteur. It Ain't Hay. Rosie the Riveter. Three Men in White. Sun Valley Serenade. Gaslight. Ghost of Frankenstein. Arsenic and Old Lace. Mark of Zorro. Desperate Journey. Dr. Gillespie's Criminal Case. Two Señoritas from Chicago. Sensations of 1945. Dixie Dugan. The War Against Mrs. Hadley. Gildersleeve's Ghost. Roger Touhy, Gangster. Omaha Trail. Song of the Open Road. Passport to Suez. Five Graves to Cairo. Gambler's Choice. Secret Command. Thousands Cheer. Destination Tokyo. Tampico. The Seventh Victim. Follow the Boys. Heart of the Golden West. Christmas Holiday. Stars on Parade. Captains Courageous. The Hairy Ape. Oklahoma Kid. Double Indemnity. The Adventures of Mark Twain. Brother Rat. Summer Storm. The Canterville Ghost. Riding High. Minstrel Man. Step Lively. Going my Way. In Old Oklahoma. Take it or Leave it. Hey, Rookie. We've Never Been Licked. Take it Big. Make Your Own Bed. The Great Moment. Tennessee Johnson. The Falcon in Mexico. Ghost Catchers. Hail the Conquering Hero. Affairs of Martha. Best Foot Forward. Mr. Winkle Goes to War. Cover Girl. Dragon Seed. Wrecking Crew. Coney Island. Maisie Gets her Man. You're a Lucky Fellow, Mr. Smith. Moonlight and Cactus. Barbary Coast Gent. The Adventures of Tartu. Up in Arms. Bride by Mistake. Pierre of the Plains. Sweet and Low Down. Margin for Error. National Barn Dance. Maisie Goes to Reno. Saratoga Trunk. Alaskan Highway. Pin-up Girl. Ox-Bow Incident. Guadalcanal Diary. Music in Manhattan. Doughgirls. The Angels Sing. Song of Bernadette. Atlantic City. Crime by Night. Rhapsody in Blue. Dr. Gillespie's New Assistants. My Gal Likes Music. Man in Half Moon Street. Hi, Beautiful. Abroad with Two Yanks. I Dood it. When Irish Eyes are Smiling. Carolina Blues. Till We Meet Again. Strike up the Band. Around the World. Strange Affair. Laura. Mrs. Parkington.

If I had known then, I probably would have never gone into the water.

We had some pretty good ball players. At least one of them, PFC Bill (William L.) Aydelotte, was good; he played triple-A semipro ball after the war. I played in two or three games on the 'Canal, but really preferred swimming.

THOMAS T. OYLER, Company C

One of my fond memories of Guadalcanal is the great volleyball games we had. The First Armored officers had a team that could compete with almost any other. It wasn't that the rest of us were any good, but we were smart enough to always feed Bill (Capt. William L.) Eubank. He was tall and an all-American end from Ole Miss. He could slam it down an opponent's throat or give the ball a light tap in the other direction.

Then there was the story of beer, LSD-5, Carter City, and how they thought the First Armored was a good outfit. One day I was in my tent when someone told me the executive officer of LSD-5 was ashore and wanted to see me. He said that "the old man" was steamed at the crew and had given them a warning that if they didn't shape up, he was going to cancel their beer ration. They didn't, so he sent the exec over with a chit for 400 cases of beer. They had been so impressed by our outfit that they wanted us to have it.

The only trouble was that the beer depot was on Tulagi. Since it was a Navy depot, we took the First Armored's Navy dentist (Lt. John J. Shute) along to hand in the chit. We told the guy in charge of the boat to Tulagi that we were going over to get some "gear." When we got to Carter City they loaned us a landing craft with a crew and a truck and driver. Once again it was our department while we had been there as a unit on the way to combat in Guam that caused them to do this for us. The dentist turned in the chit, the beer was loaded on the truck, and the truck was loaded on the boat. We rocked back and forth going across the slot to the Third Marines' dock on Guadalcanal, and then home. The beer supplied us all favorably for quite a time.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

On Guadalcanal the second time we began to get a ration of a couple of cans of beer and Coca Cola per week. We had two men in our platoon who, for religious reasons, did not drink alcohol: Earl L. Gray, a Mormon from Utah, and Cecil E. Harp from Kansas. They were absolutely the best friends of every man in the company as we all wanted to trade our cans of Coke so that we could have six to ten cans of beer apiece. Usually we would bury it in the dirt under our sacks to keep it as cool as possible. Some of the brands were Acme, Pabst, Budweiser, Miller, Grain Belt, and Griesediek. Supposedly all of our beer was "three-two", i.e., 3.2 percent alcohol. The old salts (anyone with more time in the Corps than you) sneered at 3.2 beer, but I noticed that they got just as drunk just as quickly as everyone else. Three or four cans of warm beer seemed to do that to all of us. Sometimes a guy would put a can for

himself and each of his buddies into a pail and turn a CO₂ fire extinguisher at it. This cooled the beer when the foamy "snow" hit the cans. I didn't like this though because we drank from the cans, and the chemicals remained on the can even if wiped with a cloth. On the Christmas holiday weekend, beer flowed freely and the celebrations got pretty wild.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

A favorite pastime was trying to make kickapoo joy juice. Curly (Lawrence C. Dhom) was good at that. The basic ingredient was a coconut, and we had plenty of those. Curly would bury the makings under his bunk and have the gas relief hose routed so it wouldn't be noticeable. One time something happened, and the relief hose got blocked, with no way for the gas to escape. It wasn't very long, perhaps a day or so, before we had a minor explosion under Curly's bunk. Curly subscribed to the theory, "If you don't succeed at first, try, try again." So he tried again. I'm happy to report we had only one explosion not related to the war.

C. L. WHITLOCK, Company D

Most of the fall of 1944 we were training with the new tanks and the 75mm guns, but in December the Battalion started an orchestra in which I played the big bass fiddle. We played at the Red Cross and at the hospital.

GEORGE F. ROBERTS, Company D

One Sunday some of us took a tank and went up the river looking for alligators. (No, we didn't have any live ammunition.) We saw one dead one on the bank about six or seven feet long. He was either dead or sound asleep. We decided to go swimming in that nice clean water, but after all that swimming in salt water, I almost sank like a rock in the river.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

I caught guard duty several times at night in the tank park, where we had parked our 75 tanks. We didn't have to pace back and forth, but did have to be alert, and *no sleeping*. It was kind of a spooky place at 0200 to 0400 hours. The metal in the tanks expanded in the heat of the day and sometimes popped, groaned, and made other noises when it contracted at night. Also, at the back end of the tank park was a swamp with a small stream, Cavaga Creek, wandering through it. The creek drifted toward Cavaga Lagoon, down by C and D Companies, before going into the ocean. At night in the tank park, strange noises, sometimes big splashes, in the swamp water would make the hair stand up on your neck. I don't know what critters made those noises, but imagination ran amuck sometimes.

Sometimes on Guadalcanal it would rain so hard you thought it would drive you into the ground. Our helmets kept the head dry, and the poncho, for a while, kept your

torso halfway dry, but from mid-thigh down was a disaster. I recall one night while on guard duty in the tank park that a horrible scream came from the location of C or D Company. When I asked about it the next day, I was told a guy had been stung by a scorpion or centipede. Very painful, but not usually fatal. We always shook our boots out in the morning before putting our feet into them. Another tank park story was about the guy on guard duty in the middle of the night, who was practicing his "quick draw" with his pistol. He ended up shooting and shattering his knee. He wasn't an A Company man, so I didn't know him.

One morning, when we pulled off and shook the tarp that was over the turret of our tank in the tank park, a small snake (20 to 26 inches) came sailing through the air. It was promptly dispatched. We didn't know good from bad, but had an aversion to reptiles and, fortunately, saw very few of them. Also, I can still see one of nature's oddities that I observed one bright sunny day. On one of our excursions into the jungle there were some small, shallow pools of rainwater, 12 feet by 6 feet, and no more than a foot deep. As I approached them, small fish, like minnows, *ran on land* into the water! The pools of rainwater were perhaps forty feet from a tiny stream. Another time, near sunset, a couple of guys down on the beach knocked a huge bat out of the sky with a long bamboo pole. Its body was about the size of a squirrel, but without the weight.

One of the things we joked about, but didn't want, was "mumu," or filariasis, a disease carried by mosquitoes. I don't believe we Marines knew what caused it, but we knew we didn't want it. In its later stages, as elephantiasis (we usually said "elephantitis"), it caused horrible swelling in arms, legs, testicles, or other organs. There were tales of a native who had to carry his scrotum in front of him on a wheelbarrow. A few men from the First Armored were shipped to Washington or Oregon for treatment of mumu. There was an A Company sergeant who worked on a survey (i.e., tried for a medical discharge) by faking mumu, and even faked hallucinations, but he was unsuccessful.

We got "jungle rot," or the "crud," frequently even if we weren't in the jungle, like later, on up on Saipan. Jungle rot gave you itchy, usually wet, open sores in the armpits, groin, or even on the chest. It could last for weeks, even months, in the right conditions. Daily bathing helped, but wasn't necessarily a preventative. If we didn't have it, we liberally applied foot powder in the armpits and crotch, but if we were already afflicted, we got "blue ointment" liquid applied to it daily.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

That Christmas was bleak. All of us missed our loved ones, and to be located on a tropical island thousands of miles from home, with no idea when, or if, we would return, did not make for joy. Others in the same situation must have felt the same way, as at midnight, on both sides of the "Slot" (the water between Guadalcanal and Florida and Tulagi Islands), one could see tracers and anti-aircraft fire exploding in the air.

DONALD SCHARF, Company D

Christmas day, 1944, was hot on Guadalcanal, and I was thinking of the snow back home in Wisconsin and the family celebrating the holiday. Feeling nostalgic and a bit homesick, I was surprised to see approaching me my childhood friend and buddy Marine, Thomas "Bud" Noonan. We had not seen each other since being separated after boot camp. Bud, a telephone lineman with the 1st Marine Division, had learned that the 1st Armored was on the island and came looking for me. What a great reunion! It sure made Christmas feel like being home. We had much to talk about and experiences to share, and managed to get together a few more times.

JAMES C. CHANDLER, Company B

At a general assembly on Guadalcanal Major Metzger asked if anyone had a complaint. One man asked if the Major could do anything about the chow. This was between Thanksgiving and Christmas while I was on mess duty. The chief cook located the one complaining and, when his company came to mess the next day, we were prepared. We had made two very large patties from mostly gristle and salt. When the offender got to the meat tray, I served him one of the large patties. Everyone was looking at those two extra large patties. In a few minutes he came back telling me he could not eat the patty. It was just too salty. I smiled and gave him the other special patty. He did not come back again.

During this time I helped the mess sergeant cook the Thanksgiving and Christmas turkeys. I have to hand it to the cooks. They did an excellent job of preparing and serving three hot meals. We were nearly always short of rations, and the cooks worked wonders.

ROBERT A. FISH, Company A

During this period I came down with an impacted wisdom tooth. Dr. John J. Shute, the Battalion dentist, in one of his more expansive moods, invited me to his office and worked on the tooth for about an hour. My jaw swelled up so bad he couldn't work on it anymore. He said that the next Sunday we should go to the Division dentist, who had better equipment. I think Ed (Lt. Edward M.) Dooley chauffeured me to Division, but two dentists there could do no better. So I went to the mobile hospital, and the dentist there fixed me up in a few days. For about two weeks, my jaw was swelled up, I was taking morphine, and all the time trying to teach indirect artillery fire.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

Hitchhiking one weekend on Guadalcanal, I stumbled onto the Colonial government compound, either British or Australians representing the British. This consisted of several small buildings, with natives, armed with rifles and wearing lavalavas, doing very formal British-like sentry duty. As I was looking around, I discovered that a truck was going to an area where the natives were congregated, possibly to trade things

or maybe because the colonial officer wanted to have contact with them occasionally. At the Australian officer's invitation, several of us, Army and Marine, climbed aboard the truck, and were off. We ended up at a narrow river in the jungle, where there were perhaps sixty natives, women as well as men. The women were in a group by themselves, with the men on the outside. A young maiden was surrounded by the old shriveled up or pregnant other females. She seemed to be on the protected list. All the women were bare-breasted. Trading commenced with the men, who offered bananas, wooden carvings, and I don't remember what all. I entered into negotiations with one man for a quite skillfully carved war club, about three feet long, of a dense reddish wood, with many designs carved on it. I offered him a can of Prince Albert smoking tobacco, but he insisted on "Two dolla." He finally agreed, but not till after the Australian spoke to him. I carried the club in my seabag for a year or so until one day I had to lighten my load and tossed it aside. I wish I had kept it.

On January 6 the bulletin board announced promotions in the Battalion. Among others were Harry J. Broderick, Alexander M. Campbell, Robert W. Pierce and I, all of Tank A-10, promoted to corporal.

THE LVTA-4s

In mid November 1944, First Armored men got their first look at the new amtank model which was to have a drastic effect on operations in the next invasion. During the month 46 LVTA-4s were delivered to the Battalion. More came in soon after, bringing the total to 75. Even before the LVTA-4s arrived, intensive training had begun in their

A new LVTA-4.
George D. "Moe"
DeAngelo and
John T. "Doc" Iles
with their new D-18,
Guadalcanal,
November 1945.
(Scharf)



operation and maintenance. Beginning in October, classes were held on the 75mm howitzer, with which the A-4s were armed, and on artillery, which the howitzers made possible. On October 6 a group of CPs were sent to Banika, in the Russell group of the Solomons, for training in waterproofing and fungus proofing the radios in the new tanks. After the new tanks arrived, hands-on practice began in driving them, firing the big new weapon, and getting familiar with other new features.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

In October 1944 combat training picked up. On October 3 the Company went out on a field problem. On October 30 I threw hand grenades. On November 14 I went to school on the .30- and .50-caliber machine guns. And on November 17 I was on the rifle



The LVT-4 waterborne. A new Company D amtank on a test run off Guadalcanal, late 1944. (Paul)

range all day and scored 211 out of a possible 300 with the M-1 rifle. By mid-November we were preparing the old LVTAs for salvage and loading on ships.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

A crew that included Dale L. Barker and Goldie (Mayer S.) Goldberg left Guadalcanal for the Russell Islands to replace the old SCR radios with new TCS equipment and to

waterproof the installation. No more using ponchos. The radios were enclosed in a large metal box with a removable front cover.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

In our second stay on Guadalcanal, First Armored's LVT-1 amtanks (with enclosed 37mm gun turrets) were replaced with LVT-4 amtanks, with open main turrets fitted with 75mm howitzers. These new vehicles were also equipped with improved radio gear. Several of the maintenance CPs of the Battalion, including a Marine Gunner attached to H&S Company, Tech Sergeant "Windy" (Eugene Kemp) Winchester, Staff Sergeant "Squeaky" Thomas A. Timmons, and I were temporarily

detached for repair and maintenance training on the new equipment. This entailed a one-day cruise aboard a small inter-island freighter to the island of Banika in the Russell Group of the Solomons. The environment at Banika was as near an idyllic south sea island paradise as I ever saw. This island and its neighbor, Pavuvu, had been cleared of most, if not all, tropical diseases, and had superior tent housing for both its permanent personnel and transients. We spent about a week at Banika learning to repair and maintain the new communications equipment before returning to Guadalcanal. During this time I renewed my acquaintance with Corporals Don Tangman and Bob Davis, who had been members of my radio school class at "Dodge Tech" and who were stationed at Banika as radio materiel personnel.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

We started having artillery drills even before the LVTA-4s arrived. They were equipped with a 75mm howitzer, a .50-caliber Browning machine gun, and a .30-caliber machine gun in the bow. It weighed about 19 tons and had maximum speeds of 20 mph on land and 7½ mph in water.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

After the new LVTA-4s arrived in mid-November we learned to maintain and operate them. On Tuesday morning, November 21, we went driving with the A-4s and practiced formations in water and on land. In the afternoon we serviced the tanks. On the 27th I went to artillery school during the entire morning, then worked on the new tanks in the afternoon, greasing, oiling, and gassing up. From November 30 on, we had intense school and practice on the new A-4s: driving, maintenance, setting up artillery batteries, direct and indirect firing, setting guns parallel, sighting the 75mm, etc.

BEEFING UP THE LVTA-4s

The new amtank model had serious shortcomings in its armor. As on the LVTA-1, the armor on the sides and bow was too thin to stop even small arms fire. And the new turret, which was open, left the crewmen there in a highly exposed position. The Battalion set in right away to make up for these deficiencies in the manufacturer's design. Extra steel plate was added all around and on the turret. Also, armor shielding was attached in the turret to provide higher cover for crewmen there. Later LVTA models attempted to alleviate some of the LVTA-4's problems, but in late 1944 that had to be done in the field.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

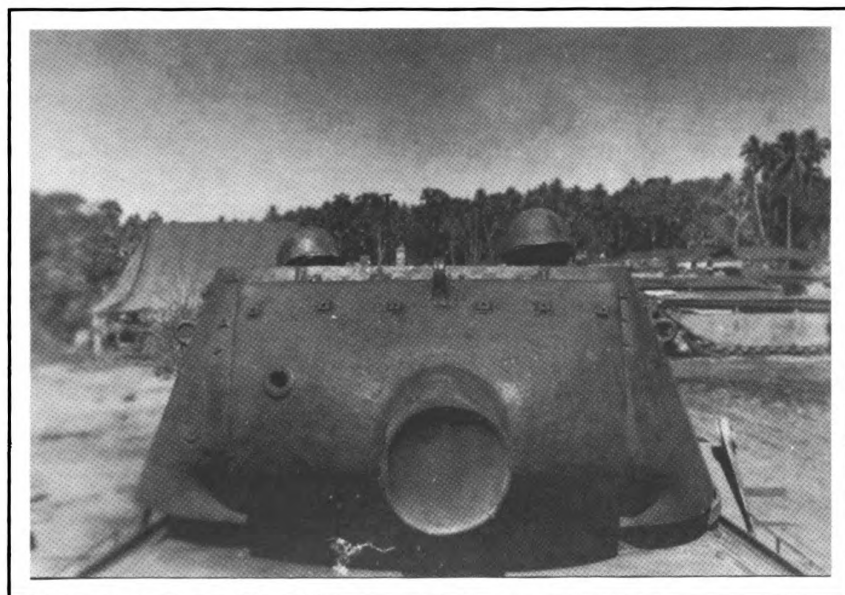
When the new LVTA-4s arrived in mid November we started an intensive operation to attach "pin on" armor to the bow and sides, and built an extension for the front and sides of the mount carrying the 75mm howitzer. Fortunately we had machine shops, welding equipment, and talented Marines who could do almost anything. Prior

to the Okinawa operation we were issued light-weight individual armor, which had been designed for aircraft crews, for our vehicle crew members. Along with the new mounts, the two scarf machine gun mounts, which were quite useless, were gone, and other improvements, such as waterproof radio cases, were added. To provide additional protection, we also planned to sandbag the sloping armor that carried the gun mount. All this took experimentation to learn whether or not the vehicles could carry the additional weight. It is unfortunate that these additional protections were not included when the vehicles were designed and built.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

Our new tanks, the LVTA-4s, with the 75mm howitzer, began arriving on Friday, November 17, and more came in for several days after that. On Monday, November 20,

we received personnel replacements. The maintenance crews began right away to check out and service the new tanks. By Monday, November 27, we had a blueprint drawn up for improvements. I was cutting armor plate all day on Monday, December 4, and worked all week cutting more steel for armor, sandbag racks, and driver water shields. But on Monday, the 11th, the Seabees took over the job



Added armor plate in front of the new LVTA-4 turret. (Scharf)

of armor-plating the tanks.

There were still other modifications we had to make ourselves, such as the sandbag racks, shields for the gun mounts, holes for blowers in the cargo compartments, and vision slots. I cut sheet metal on December 4 for a table for intelligence information. We worked a week in January installing a boom for the maintenance tractor, D-zero, and another week putting a winch on the Company jeep. The new tanks required routine maintenance and servicing, and some had tough problems. It took a month to get D-7's engine running right. There was plenty of brake trouble the first time the new tanks went out on maneuvers. We had our casualties in maintenance. Both Paul B. Wigsten and Robert C. Otto burned an eye doing welding work, and I had back problems, probably from too much lifting.

TRAINING ON THE LVTA-4s

Even though artillery training would be our biggest next challenge, there was much else to learn about operating and maintaining our new vehicle, particularly the new howitzer. Our amphibious assault and patrol missions could not be neglected. Heavy attention was given to direct firing, both ashore and waterborne.

WILLIS D. BOOTH, Company D

When we got our new tanks, we went out in the water to test them. "Sparky" (Carl H.) Spry was the CP, and I was the driver. When we fired the howitzer for the first time, both the plastic bubbles over our heads exploded and the periscope came down and smashed me on the head. I lost control and had the tank spinning in circles, with Lieutenant Dick (Richard P.) Greene screaming in my ears. His words are not printable.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

In the afternoon of December 5 we serviced the tanks, loaded 98 rounds of ammunition aboard the tank, and drove it aboard an LCT. The LCT cast off at about 0645 the next morning and took us to a small island that we were to fire on. The 1st Platoon and part of the 2d Platoon fired in the morning, while the remaining B Company men stayed aboard the LCT. The gunners, assistant gunners, and tank commanders did all the firing with the 75mm howitzer. The first shot was fired from outside the turret. Inside the driver's compartment, I was pretty tense waiting for that first shot, the first I had ever experienced from the 75mm being fired over my head. The concussion was pretty heavy, partly opening both hatches. I decided the 75mm was a weapon with plenty of fire power. Altogether we fired 48 rounds, 46 H.E. (high-explosive) and two H.E.A.P. (high-explosive, armor-piercing). We went through three formations, and I did all the driving. I also got to fire 100 rounds on the bow machine



Extensions to turret armor providing higher shielding for turret crewmen on the new LVTA-4s. (Scharf)

gun. In the afternoon the remaining men took over the tanks and went through the same procedure. I spent the afternoon aboard the LCT and went swimming. When finished, we recovered the tanks and returned to camp. We had had a tough and tiring day, and my ears were ringing from the concussion.

Our training continued. On December 11, all day, we practiced direct fire on land. We fired ten shots at bunkers from 500 and 1000 yards, then advanced and fired four or five more rounds. We were divided into two sections, with the first three tanks advancing, then the other three advancing. The first run was a dummy, then two more runs firing. Our crew fired 40 rounds of H.E. I did all the driving and found that by then the concussion didn't bother me as much as before.

For the next two months we did intensive training, with exercises on land and water, artillery practice, camouflage, anti-aircraft firing, and two- and three-day field maneuvers, including night problems. We also continued to get infantry training. We welded more armor plate on all the tanks, and for two weeks I worked at painting numbers on the tanks.

RICHARD A. VOGEL, H&S Company

In the period between Guam and Okinawa I was assigned a small crew job to paint every tank and tractor in the Battalion. We painted them all green instead of the original steel blue. I've always wondered what would have happened if the original color would have been green. Would we have had to paint them steel blue? For that job we worked seven days a week.

ROBERT W. PIERCE, Company A

We learned one of the hazards of firing smoke rounds one day when a fire started in the meadow where we were practicing. We fought the flames with our dungaree jackets for several hours.

ARTILLERY TRAINING

It did not necessarily follow that the *potential* of the amtank-borne 75mm howitzer for artillery work would result in the emergence of a new artillery force. Other armored amphibian battalions did not assume artillery functions. The idea was conceived of by Major Metzger and then developed, promoted, and implemented by him. He convinced the higher echelons of the potential value of having the added strength of a new artillery unit which was both mobile and amphibious. For First Armored troops the new mission required a lot of training and dedication.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

With time to think, I wondered if there were any functions, other than those which we had performed in the past, which would justify the large amount of shipping

that our battalion took. The addition of 75mm howitzers provided the answer. Prior to entering the Marine Corps, I had been in an Army ROTC field artillery unit and had served a year as a reserve officer in the Army artillery. Our new weapons were fundamentally artillery pieces and, in addition to direct fire, could be fired as such. The solution to our further utilization was at hand. But we had to develop the techniques of employment, modify our organization to accommodate the new role and, lastly—perhaps the most difficult—get the Marine artillery units to accept our addition and fold us into their fire plan.

After a lot of consideration and, fortunately the cooperation of the artillery regimental commander of the 6th Marine Division, we came up with a plan. As each armored amphibian company had 18 LVTA-4s divided into three platoons of five each, with three vehicles being in company headquarters, it was determined that each firing battery would be four 75mm howitzers (i.e., one battery per platoon), with the platoon commander's vehicle providing the FDC (Fire Direction Center). This provided the needed redundancy in the event the platoon leader's vehicle was lost in the assault phase. The company commander's three vehicles provided an additional standby fire direction center. The unused ammunition in the command vehicles could be shifted to the firing batteries in the event of need. This plan provided 48 weapons firing and, although of lesser caliber, more tubes than the artillery regiment. Further, as the Marine Corps no longer employed 75mm howitzers in its artillery regiments, there was a large supply of 75mm ammunition available. The worth of this concept would be proved on Okinawa.

Initially it was envisioned that the armored amphibians would provide their own forward observers, and training of officers and NCOs was commenced. That required more communications equipment, however, and could cause confusion; so it was decided that the artillery regimental forward observers would control the fire. That plan worked well and, as our crews and fire direction centers progressed in their training, the artillery regiment sent down forward observers to work with the Battalion. There were more than adequate firing ranges on Guadalcanal, and they were employed frequently.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

The LVTA-4 tank had a six-man crew, whereas the LVTA-1 had seven men. A new and additional mission for our tanks, now that we had the 75mm howitzer, was to learn and gain experience in firing as conventional artillery when once ashore or when requested. That meant learning about aiming stakes, powder bags, fire direction centers, and a host of other strange things. Acting as artillery, we were to fill the gap on an assault until regular artillery could get ashore, which often might be many hours. At other times we were to serve as additional artillery firepower when requested.

We spent a lot of time on Guadalcanal crashing through the jungle, finding a clearing, setting up as a battery of four tanks (out of the five in a platoon), aligning all guns on the aiming stakes, establishing the target range, determining the number of powder bags to use (there were four in each brass shell casing), and determining the

setting to be put on to the gun sight. At first these were all dry runs, but eventually we started using ammo when we had established familiarity with the procedures. The fifth tank in a platoon was the fire direction center (FDC) for the battery, made up of the other four tanks. We also used all five tanks in the platoon as a battery, with a total of 15 guns to fire from three platoons, and the FDC being one of the three company command tanks. We could even use all 18 guns (tanks) from each of the four line companies, with a Battalion command tank as FDC. We practiced, and we fired, using all sorts of combinations.

I was one of the men picked to act as the 2d Platoon FDC and also as the Company A FDC. This was in the days before electronic calculators or computers. We used



A battery of camouflaged amtanks doing artillery practice. Guadalcanal, late 1944 or early 1945. (Houston)

slide rules and became quite good, and fast, in their use. There was personal stress in this as one didn't want to be always the last battery in the company to report the necessary changes in range (elevation) and in movement laterally to the right or left.

There was a forward observer, whose duty was to pick the targets, observe the strike of the artillery shells, and then call back necessary corrections to put those shells on top of the target. He would phone back, "Up 200 yards," or "Left 75

yards," etc. The FDC would then convert that yardage into clicks on the gun sights. Each gun in the battery would require identical information; e.g., when the FDC passed the word to the battery, "Up 5 clicks," each gunner would adjust his gun so that its elevation moved higher by five clicks. Each click or movement of the sight by the gunner's fingers could be felt, thus the term, "click." As the distance to the target from the gun increased, a greater number of clicks was needed to hit the target because the shell had to be shot higher into the sky.

Then also, as there were four powder bags (gun powder sewn into white cloth bags) in each shell's brass casing, this, too, had to be taken into account as four bags of powder would propel the shell a lot farther, and faster, than one bag. If the target was

over a hill or several hills, the shell had to be shot high enough that it went over the hill instead of hitting it. In our outfit, as I remember, an officer in the FDC determined the powder charge.

Each gun sight in the battery was aimed at the same aiming stake. The FDC used battery powered phones to call out to the tanks an adjustment to the guns. The sight would be adjusted, the gun moving with it. Unless it was a minor adjustment, one round by one gun only was fired to observe the accuracy of the new adjustment. If the strike of the shell was okay, then the battery of guns was ready to commence firing when ordered. Each gun sight would then be readjusted back to the aiming stake, without moving the guns correspondingly. The shells we had were smoke (for observation or screening purposes), high explosive (HE), and canister. Canister was like very big buck-shot when fired, and was for direct fire, to mow down concentrations of enemy in fairly close quarters to the gun. Fortunately, our tank never had occasion to use canister.

ROBERT A. FISH, Company A

The new LVTA-4 really expanded our fighting capability. Besides having better direct support capabilities, we could assist the infantry with indirect artillery fire.

Somehow I inherited the job of artillery instructor. After several weeks of training and dry runs, we went into the field for live-round training. The firing range was a few miles from camp. Every unit would get some time in the field for this purpose. At the edge of the impact area a forward observation post was established, where I, and other members of the Battalion, directed the fire. After a few weeks Battalion gunners were improving their marksmanship and proving to be able to adjust their fire onto the target. One day we were firing for effect when a round landed a few yards from the observation platform. No damage, but it scared hell out of the forward observers. Somebody had pulled a charge from the projectile by mistake. I often wondered if this was a mistake, or if somebody was trying to tell me something! The Battalion did finally achieve a passable grade on indirect fire, and I was really proud of the whole outfit. With our expanded capability, we did not need to see the enemy to hit them with artillery fire.

THOMAS T. OYLER, Company C

A thing of interest on Guadalcanal was the fine instruction given by a 1st lieutenant from the 11th Artillery Battalion on using our new 75mm's. His quick course on how to fire as artillery was a classic on training people in horizontal and vertical control.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

Reports filtered back to the 6th Division commander that maybe those armored amphibian fellows had something. I was informed that the Division commanding general was coming to observe the firing. On the morning of the demonstration, the commanding general, the artillery regiment CO, the G-3, and I

sat on an observation tower with the artillery forward observers who were to control the shoot. Firing began on some preselected targets, and everything went like a dream, almost too smoothly. I was filled with joy at the Battalion's performance and was congratulating myself. Then the division commander became suspicious that he was seeing a canned demonstration. He picked his own target, a single bush, 150 yards in front of the tower and said, "Hit that." The fire direction center radioed back, "Below safe elevation." At that point the artillery regiment CO exercised his expertise and issued the order, "Safe to fire." The first shell landed just 100 yards in front of the tower, and two more rounds were still in the air. I practically pushed the general down the ladder. The remainder of the Marines simply jumped off the tower. The second shell impacted 75 yards in front of the tower and the third, 50 yards. There were no casualties. The general did congratulate me on a good shoot, but was heard to grumble that he didn't want the armored amphibians shooting too close to *his* men. It was a bad day.

GEORGE F. ROBERTS, Company D

I heard that the brass was on an elevated reviewing stand observing from what they thought was a safe distance. I don't know this for a fact, but am guessing that some yo-yo made an even 100-mil error in his horizontal deflection and fired for effect.

About that time I was promoted to tank commander. The crew included Joe (Joseph C.) Baumbach, assistant tank commander and CP; Carlton S. Renhard, driver; John E. "Jughead" Lindberg, gunner; Grant T. Wheelin, machine gunner; and John W. "Chick" Regentz, machine gunner. Of course, the machine gunners also doubled as ammunition passers.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

Some of my fellow CPs opted to transfer to line duty, and most of these received intensive training in 75mm howitzer artillery science. The amtank proved to be a good platform for the howitzer as its undercarriage suspension absorbed a lot of recoil and faithfully returned the weapon to its proper azimuth and elevation after firing each round.

PREPARATIONS FOR COMBAT

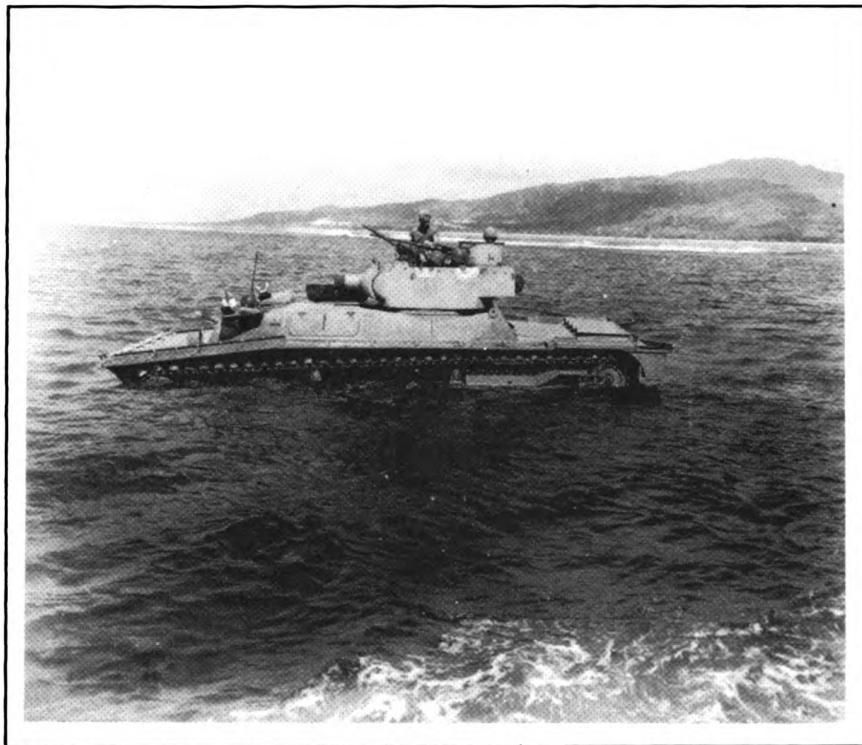
Early in 1945 it became clear to everyone that a new combat operation was brewing and that the First Armored Amphibian Battalion would not be on Guadalcanal much longer. On January 10 the Battalion was attached to the new Sixth Marine Division for tactical planning and training, a relationship which proved productive and congenial. Training was intensified, not only in artillery but also in more accustomed operations. The companies and platoons were out some ten different times in two months for field exercises in artillery, direct firing, anti-aircraft firing, waterborne firing, and personal weapons firing. The modifications being made to strengthen the LVTA-4

were pushed to completion. All activities were directed toward maneuvers with the 6th Marine Division and subsequent departure from Guadalcanal.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

Besides artillery training, we also conducted firing exercises on both land and water, the latter using Hutcheson Shoals in the "Slot," several miles off Tetere Beach. Command post exercises to test our communication abilities were carried out. Infantry training was also conducted. It was a Battalion objective that every man in a vehicle crew be able to carry out the functions of the other crew members. The 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion was a well-trained, combat-tested outfit, due in large part to the fine Marines who formed the organization.

As our nearest headquarters with Administrative Command was on Hawaii, and the units we were attached to exercised only operations control, the Battalion commander was free to exercise his judgment on many matters which



LVT(A)-4 in a waterborne exercise. Guadalcanal, late 1944 or early 1945. (Paul)

would not normally be allowed. Marines were shifted between Military Occupational Fields, many times at the request of the individual. Promotions up to Table of Organization levels were authorized which allowed the true leaders to be rewarded.

In January we were attached to the 6th Marine Division, without doubt the finest division with which we served. It was commanded by Maj. General Lemuel C. Shepherd, later to be Commandant of the Marine Corps, and an experienced combat leader. His division had been formed from the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, reinforced with the 29th Marines and its supporting units. For the first time our battalion was accepted, understood, and taken into "the family." Unfortunately, the Division headquarters was at Tassafaronga, several miles north by jeep. Nevertheless, the understanding, intelligent and professional staff made the relationship unusual, and most rewarding. On occasion

the Division commander would provide an observation-type aircraft to move the Battalion commander and key staff planners between the two headquarters. As a result, planning went well and, for the first time, the Battalion's full capabilities were to be utilized. General Shepherd and his operations officer, Lt. Colonel Victor H. Krulak (now Lt. General), visited the Battalion on several occasions and observed our artillery training.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

By late January 1945 the word was out that another invasion was imminent. We had training sessions on enemy civilians, what to expect from them, and our behavior towards them. There were talks on poisonous snakes, typhus, cholera, etc., and we received seven inoculations, including such exotic stuff as cholera. We didn't know our destination, but rumors were plentiful about the China coast, Java, Borneo, Formosa, the Kuril Islands, and other places.

About this time A Company conducted some infantry-type games. We spent some time pulling the lead out of old .30-caliber ammo and then replacing it with soap or wax. We split into two groups, a "defense group" heading off into the jungle to set up an ambush, and an "attack group" to come along about an hour later. I was in the defense group. Actually, we were short on tactics, but long on enthusiasm. Being in a rain forest, the jungle floor being level (no ridges or heights), a couple of defenders got up into huge trees. Another guy and I each dug a "spider trap," a vertical foxhole, pulled a little vegetation over the top, and waited. After a while the attackers approached in a skirmish line. I could see Captain Thomas J. (Joe) Garfield sneaking along with them. When they were about to us, we slipped the camouflage aside and started firing our carbines. I gave the Captain a face full of soap. We figured we had wiped out about ten of them, but they wanted to play the game longer. It was difficult to convince them, especially the Captain, that they were indeed out of the game. As I think of it, that was a dangerous game. That soap or wax could put out eyes or chip teeth, but it killed a day anyway and gave us some laughs. Of course, with clothes soaking wet with perspiration from being in the boondocks like that, we had more laundry to take care of when we returned to camp. Longer stays in the bush, when you slept there in your clothes, meant we didn't change very frequently.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

On the day after Christmas the Battalion went inland for a three-day maneuver simulating actual combat, firing day and night. The practice included driving, direct firing, machine guns, small arms, and communications. Then we set up in batteries and played like we were artillery. We changed position and fired at the same time, i.e., one battery fired while the other moved. Division Commander, General Lemuel C. Shepherd, came and looked us over one day. I guess he was satisfied.

FINAL MANEUVERS

As a climax to the intensive training which had engaged the time and energy of the First Armored for more than three months, the Battalion went on large-scale maneuvers with the Sixth Marine Division. On Tuesday and Wednesday, February 27 and 28 troops and amtanks mounted onto LSTs and LSMs and moved across the Slot to Tulagi and Purvis Bay. Four landings—on March 2, 3, 5, and 6—were made on beaches near Cape Esperance and Tassafaronga in northern Guadalcanal, near Savo Island. The landing on Tuesday, March 6, was the most comprehensive, comprising the coordination of landing waves, moving inland, setting up command posts, communications, and simulated artillery firing in support of advancing infantry. All units returned to Camp McCartney on the 6th.

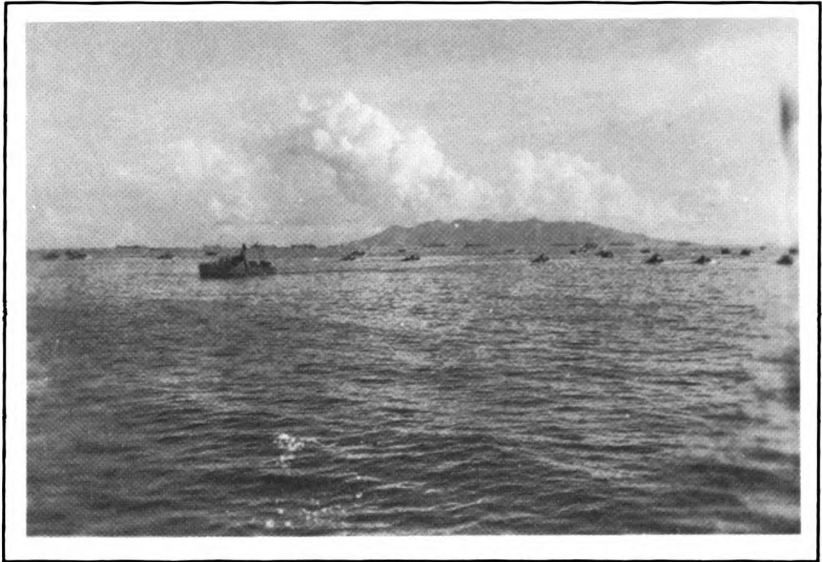
STEPHEN MARUSKY,
Company B

On Feb. 23, 1945, Captain Edgar S. Carlson held a company assembly to tell us we would move out soon, and on the 24th we began to pack our personal gear. On the Feb. 26 I was on a Battalion ordnance working party belting .50-caliber ammunition, and on the 27th I was on a 36-man detail loading K rations and oil on LST 681. On the 28th, after reveille at 0445, we loaded all personal gear and equipment aboard the tank and left camp at 0900. We boarded LST 681 at dock, dogged the tanks down, and crossed over to Tulagi, where the ship lay that night.

Reveille aboard ship was at 0500 on March 2, our first day of maneuvers. We practiced ship-to-shore assault landings, hitting the beach in combat formation. These were large-scale maneuvers with plenty of ships taking part. Choppy water made tank driving a little wet. We returned to our parent LST, refueled, and were taken aboard about 1400.

On the next day, March 3, we repeated the maneuver, but upon hitting the beach, we advanced inland about 50 yards. We then returned to the beach and set up in battery position. Returning to the LST, we were refueled by bowser boat, then taken aboard. We secured about 1300.

We had the day off on Sunday, March 4, but on the 5th and 6th we repeated the



First Armored amtanks on maneuvers, Guadalcanal, March 1945. Savo Island is in the background. (Paul)

March 3 maneuvers. At about 2130 in the evening of March 6 we left the LST and, in the rain, returned to our camp on Guadalcanal.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

We packed all personal and combat gear on Monday, February 26, in preparation for departure, and on Tuesday the First Armored loaded tanks and men on ships. Our 2d Platoon boarded LSM 271 at 1300 and found our accommodations were very good. We crossed over to Tulagi and tied up alongside two other LSMs. The boys almost



*First Armored amtanks on maneuvers, Guadalcanal, March 1945.
(Houston)*

fainted when the cook asked, "What will you have for noon chow? Lamb chops, beef, or ham?" It was the best chow we had had in quite some time. We had movies aboard ship both Wednesday and Thursday nights.

The ships left Tulagi Thursday night for maneuvers Friday, March 2, on a Guadalcanal beach. D-7's governor went bad, D-8 had idling trouble, D-9 had a loose gear shift, and D-10's "little Joe" generator fouled up. On the second day of maneuvers, Saturday, March 3, we had

a lot of tank troubles. D-5 ripped its final drive out, and D-7 caught two holes in a pontoon. On Sunday I went back to camp for spare parts, then welded the holes in D-7 and also replaced the governor and generator drive. We made landings again on Monday and set up as artillery with camouflage over the tanks. All the tanks performed okay. On Tuesday, March 6, we made our fourth landing, then returned to the ships at 1500 and back to Camp on Guadalcanal at 1900.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

Late in February 1945, we boarded LSTs and departed for maneuvers in the Cape Esperance/Tassafaronga area. We made several ship-to-shore landings in the tanks, plus jungle crashing with them. Our A Company sleepwalker, PFC Robert L. Schwaninger did it again, wandering off into the jungle and waking up a wee bit lost. We made our final beach assault the morning of March 6, and then went inland and set up as artillery, utilizing forward observers, fire direction centers, and the complete course.

THE LAST FEW DAYS ON GUADALCANAL

Returning to camp from maneuvers late in the day on Tuesday, March 6, the Battalion spent the next four days servicing the am tanks and checking all equipment. In that time Lt. Colonel Metzger ordered an extra ration of beer and a half holiday. By then it had become general knowledge that our destination was another unheard-of island called Okinawa Shima in the Ryukyus. On Saturday, March 10—and continuing into Sunday—men and tanks were loaded onto four LSTs and seven LSMs, and transported to Tulagi. We were saying good-bye forever to Guadalcanal, an island on which, in our two sojourns there, we had spent about 277 days—more than nine months. On Monday, March 12, our convoy departed Tulagi at about 0900.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

We stayed in camp March 7 through 10, servicing the tanks, cleaning weapons, loading combat ammunition aboard the tanks, and squaring away our personal gear. Besides .30-caliber and .50-caliber machine gun ammo, we loaded 125 rounds for the 75mm. At a general assembly in the morning of March 9, Lt. Colonel Metzger told us a few things pertaining to our coming operation. Late on March 10 we turned in our cots, seabags, and pads and at 2030, in heavy rain, left the Battalion tank park, drove out to the LST, boarded, and dogged down the tanks. We lay off Tulagi all day Sunday.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

I worked on D-7 all day Wednesday and Thursday, trying to get more power. There was a general assembly on Friday. I had the Duty NCO watch, but was called to the maintenance area to replace the transmission in D-6 and worked on that till 2100. We had all our gear and equipment packed and ready on Saturday, but didn't board ship till 0800 on Sunday. The 2d Platoon was again on LSM 271. We crossed over to Tulagi, arriving at 1500. The ship then went to a repair ship to have its engine repaired and stayed there all night. We left Tulagi at 0900 on Monday, March 12, bound for Okinawa.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

At about 1000 on March 6, the last day of the maneuvers, a runner caught up with me in the bush. He told me that 1st Sergeant William G. Buttery had driven down from our camp at Tetere Beach (about a 50-mile trip) to advise me that my sister, 1st Lieutenant Jean Addison of the U.S. Army Nurse Corps, had come from New Caledonia and was on the island to visit me. It wasn't easy but I got permission from my platoon leader, Lieutenant Charles Spilman, and my company commander, Captain Garfield, to leave the area for a visit with Jean. I rode in a jeep to the 137th Station Hospital, where Jean was staying, located between Henderson Field and Koli Point. I don't think Jean was sure if I was her brother as she approached this dirty, sweaty, unshaven Marine dressed in dirty, sweaty dungarees, steel helmet, leggings, pistol belt with pistol, canteen, ammo pouches, first aid pouch, and combat knife. Later I got cleaned up and shaved,

and we enjoyed visits on two more days.

On March 8 we loaded the tanks for combat, with one unit (125 rounds) of 75mm ammo and also .30- and .50-caliber ammo for the machine guns. After noon chow, Jean showed up, causing quite a stir in the camp. To avoid meeting men naked or just in skivvies, the word was hollered up and down the company area that a woman was in camp and to cover up. I was able to go back with her to the hospital area for a last evening before she left for New Caledonia the next day.

RICHARD ZENGER, Company D

The Battalion left Guadalcanal without me on March 11. David S. Watkins of H&S Company and I had been selected that morning to return to the States to enter the V-12 program. This came as a huge surprise to both of us.

In my case, I was sitting on my cot in the tent with the rest of my tank crew waiting to go aboard an LST which was sitting on the beach with its ramp down. Our tank was warming up in front of the tent. A runner appeared at our tent telling me to report to the mess hall on the double. On arrival I found myself in front of three Battalion officers, who asked me a lot of questions about my education and my Marine Corps experience. They asked me if I would like to go to college, and I said that was where I would have been if the war hadn't intervened. About fifteen minutes later, back at my tent, the runner appeared again and told me to report in clean khakis to Lt. Colonel Metzger's office. I had to dig my khakis out of my seabag, which was stowed in the Company supply tent in preparation for our departure. On arrival at the Colonel's office I found David Watkins chatting with Sergeant Major Paul DuB. Holmes. He ushered us into the office, where we found the CO clad in dungarees, sitting at his desk. He informed us that we were being transferred to the U.S. to attend a university under the Navy V-12 program. He wished us good luck and said the Battalion would miss us where they were going, but he couldn't tell us where that was. He stood up, shook us each by the hand, strapped on his pistol, donned his helmet, and walked down the beach to a lowered ramp of a waiting LST while we watched from the porch of his office. By the time I got back to my tent my tank and crew had already boarded one of the LSTs.

Within a few days the Sergeant Major had cut our orders and sent us with our seabags to the Henderson Field area to look for transportation. We lived a few days with a Seabee battalion until a Navy transport ship showed up, which was headed for San Francisco via Noumea, New Caledonia. The ship was anchored off the beach, lightering in some supplies. So David and I got a ride to the ship on one of the lighters, climbed the steep ladder up the ship's side, saluted aft, and asked the officer of the deck for a ride. He checked our orders and told us to go below and find an empty bunk. As I recall, it took us seventeen days to get to Treasure Island. I read several books, and we played a lot of "hearts" on a hatch cover in our quarters. I was still aboard the ship when we heard about the Okinawa invasion, and I was a student at UC Berkeley when the war ended.

CHAPTER

TWELVE

From Guadalcanal to Okinawa

All assault units of the First Armored Amphibian Battalion departed from Guadalcanal on March 12, 1945, in a convoy of LSTs and LSMs. Because the little LSMs could accommodate only platoon-size units, the Battalion was fragmented much more than usual. Other Battalion men left three days later on the faster troop ships (APAs) and cargo ships (AKAs). The itinerary was from Guadalcanal to Ulithi, and then on to Okinawa. Ulithi was the staging center for the invasion.

The LSM (Landing Ship, Medium) was a new type of ship for the First Armored. Much smaller than the LST, it was only a little more than 200 feet long and 34 feet at the beam. Its superstructure was off to the starboard side of the ship and overlooked an open well deck which ran the length of the ship. An LSM could accommodate in its well deck six amtanks, which could be loaded and unloaded by a ramp in the bow of the ship.

FROM GUADALCANAL TO ULITHI

Official dissemination of intelligence about our coming operation began soon after departure. Troops were told of the island of Okinawa, the natives there, the presumed strength and nature of Japanese defense, and the battle plan. The landing was scheduled for April 1 (designated as L-Day), Easter Sunday.

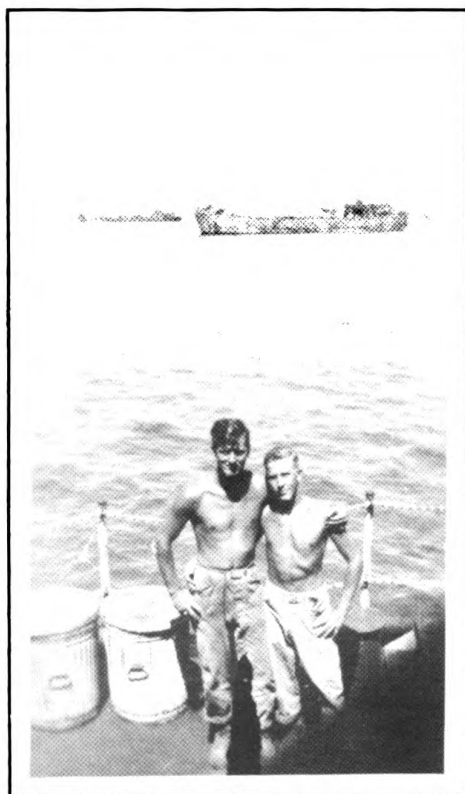
The passage to Ulithi aboard the LSTs and LSMs was uncrowded. The transport plan was to avoid, as long as possible, cramming infantry and other assault troops aboard the small landing ships. Those troops were transported aboard the faster APAs and AKAs as far as Ulithi before transferring them to the landing ships. With only our amtank crews aboard to strain their resources, the LSTs and LSMs tended to be more accommodating with food, showers, and even laundry facilities.

ROBERT W. PIERCE, Company A

We loaded on a different type of ship for the invasion of Okinawa. It was called an LSM (Landing Ship, Medium). It had a front ramp similar to the LST's, but the amphib tanks were exposed and the turrets extended slightly higher than the ship's side rails. It rained very frequently on our convoy. The ship had no troop quarters, and we slept outside on the tanks. We pitched large tarps for some protection, but we had a lot of drying out to do between squalls.

GEORGE F. ROBERTS, Company D

Our LSM was just recently out of the States and had not carried troops before. And so the crew was friendly. We had a dog with us that had more seagoing time than most of the ship's crew. We just got along fine and, if any of us would see a sailor moving stores or whatever, we would bear a hand. We had the run of the ship. I used to go up on the con (bridge) at night and watch the radar—poor man's television. The engineering officer was a kick when he was on watch. He would let the ship lag behind in position and then call down for "All ahead full" just to "blow the soot out of it."



On the way to Okinawa: Robert C. "Cork" Blaemire and Milton E. "Shorty" Wirth of Company C, 3d Platoon. (Blaemire)

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

Our convoy left the Tulagi anchorage at 0900 on March 12. Upon departure Captain Edgar S. Carlson gave us the scoop that our destination and target was the island of Okinawa Shima in the Ryukyu Islands. That same day the crew of LST 681 had gunnery practice.

As usual, life aboard ship was dull. We had school on the coming operation, about the island, the Japanese, the natives, the beaches, and Yontan airfield. B Company was to hit Red Beach 1. We had physical exercise every day at 1530, once we had a pistol inspection, and once I ran the tank engine. Mostly I spent the days reading and sleeping.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

Each LSM had on board one of our platoons: five tanks and their crews. We were told our destination would be Okinawa and the invasion would be on April 1,

Easter Sunday. Company A would be hitting Red Beaches 2 and 3, after which we would set up as artillery as soon as possible. Company A was to lead the 1st Battalion, 4th Marines into the beach, about one mile northwest of the town of Sobe and immediately west of Yontan airfield. On March 15 aboard ship we cleaned the 75mm, the machine guns, the Tommy gun, and our rifles and pistols. Those LSMs rocked constantly, and I do mean rock. On Sunday, March 18, we had a real short church service aboard.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

The chow was good on LSM 271, and we had the use of the ship's laundry. The sea was mighty rough at times. Many days we had school about Okinawa and the coming operation. I checked out the tanks to have them in good running condition, and worked on D-8's "little Joe," on D-9's brakes, and on the jeep.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

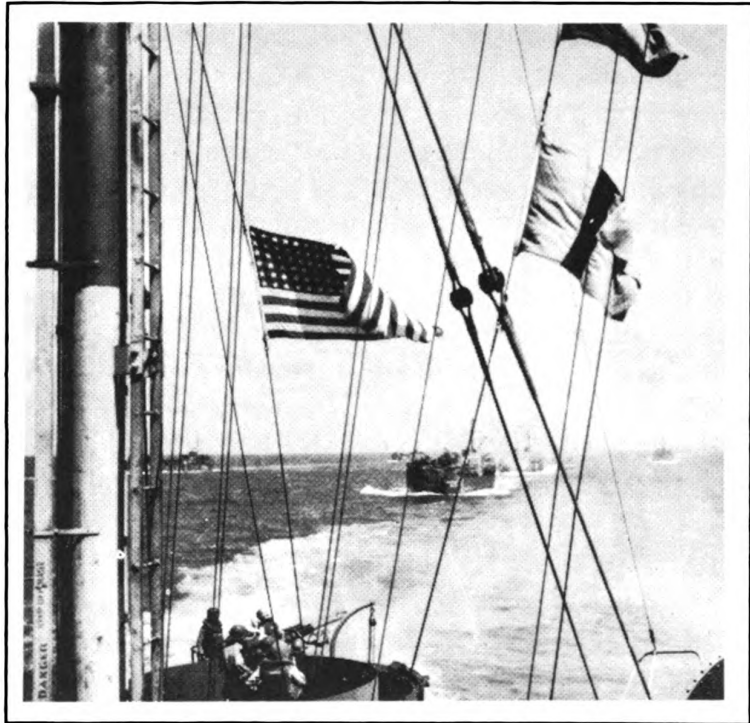
Poor Bobby (Robert A.) Charton no sooner got aboard than he got seasick. He spent most of his time in the sack, barely eating anything. We sure felt sorry for him, but there was nothing we could do to make him comfortable.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

On the LST from Guadalcanal to Okinawa I found a good place to sleep—topside under a 40mm gun. I even had my own intercom box by my sack, hooked up to the ship's radio.

The days were spent mostly in exercise and classes on intelligence for the invasion.

For this operation B-3 had new crew members: Sergeant Paul L. Harris was the tank commander, Corporal Jim (James C.) Chandler the 75mm gunner, PFC Harold E. "Bus" Jones the ammo passer, Steve (Stephen) Marusky the driver, and I as radio operator, bow machine gunner, assistant driver, and computer. Also riding with us was our platoon sergeant, Master Gunnery Sergeant Bernard P. Simmons.



An Okinawa-bound convoy. (Navy)

ROBERT W. PIERCE, Company A

We learned shortly after we were under way that Ollie (Oliver T.) Dowling had stowed away on a tank. He had been assigned to the rear echelon but chose to make the Okinawa landing with his outfit. He was disciplined and given some very tough duty from then on. Only after we were discharged and had a chance to talk to the officers involved did we learn how much they regretted having to punish him.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

A Marine combat outfit departing for a combat engagement must necessarily leave behind a rear echelon to safeguard goods and equipment left at the departure base and see to its proper disposition. By the time a Marine qualifies for combat duty, his mind-set is such that he much prefers front line duty over anything resembling rear echelon, especially when most of his buddies are going into combat. While no stigma attaches to rear echelon duty, neither is there much opportunity for glory or much satisfaction in recounting one's rear echelon experiences. Marines perform rear echelon duty involuntarily and only because they are ordered to do so.

At the time of our departure for Okinawa, First Armored established and detailed a rear echelon at Guadalcanal to "reclaim" our camping area to its natural condition and dispose of goods and equipment we left behind. When our convoy was well clear of the Solomons, at least one B Company rear echelon enlisted man was discovered, stowed away aboard our LSM. The senior Marine officer aboard, Marine Gunner Walter L. Gibson, ordered this rogue confined to quarters, on bread and water, pending court martial for deserting his post in time of war. Or at least the Gunner went through the motions of this procedure, but any paper work must have disappeared, for the scoundrel was restored to full duty before we reached Ulithi, and nothing further was said or intimated about punishing him for having forsaken the rear echelon in favor of the first assault wave at Okinawa.

STAGING AT ULITHI

The LSTs, LSMs, APAs, AKAs, and their escorts all arrived on the same day, Wednesday, March 21, at Ulithi Atoll in the western Carolines. The lagoon there, 19 miles long and 5 to 10 miles wide, was big enough to provide excellent anchorage for a great amphibious armada, larger than any fleet previously seen by the First Armored. Ulithi was the staging area where ships bearing the 1st and 6th Marine Divisions and some other units of the III Amphibious Corps were assembled. Naval vessels of all kinds—aircraft carriers, hospital ships, many other types—were continually coming and going as they prepared for the Okinawa invasion. Some of the aircraft carriers, notably the *USS Franklin*, bore grim evidence of *kamikaze* damage incurred in recent air strikes against the Japanese home islands. The presence of a British Carrier Force, constituting Task Force 57, marked the entry of the Royal Navy in the Pacific War. The British left

Ulithi on Friday, March 23, to bomb Japanese airfields in the Sakishima Islands in the southern Ryukyus.

As we lay at anchor in the Ulithi lagoon, infantry and other assault troops were transferred from the APAs to landing ships. Arrangements were made for First Armored and other units to have a brief time to relax ashore on Mogmog, one of Ulithi's coral islets, but that plan was not realized for everyone. Our LSTs and LSMs left Ulithi, bound for Okinawa, late on Sunday, March 25, the APAs and AKAs two days later.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

I couldn't believe the number of ships in the Ulithi lagoon. As far as the eye could see there were ships of all sizes and shapes. I didn't know there were that many ships in the world.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

The lagoon at Ulithi was filled with a wide variety of warships, in huge numbers. By this time in the war, progress in the European Theater enabled the release of many naval forces from there to the Pacific. For the first time we saw elements of the British navy, including aircraft carriers. Many of these British ships departed Ulithi a few days ahead of us. What part, if any, they played in the Okinawa invasion I never learned.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

We rendezvoused at Ulithi Atoll with many other elements of the Okinawa invasion. To avoid subjecting the infantry to a long and debilitating sea voyage under crowded conditions, they were loaded aboard transports for the first stage of their trip, and at Ulithi were transferred to LSTs and LSMs. On Saturday afternoon, March 24, the war was brought home to many of us when we witnessed the battered carrier, *USS Franklin*, escorted by a cruiser, limp into the anchorage. Big Ben, as she was familiarly called, had been severely damaged by suicide planes. We steamed out of Ulithi the next day.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

Most of the Battalion went ashore on Mogmog Island for beer and "recreation." Along with many ships of the U.S. 3d Fleet in the Ulithi lagoon were major elements of the British Pacific Fleet, including the battleship, *King George V*, and aircraft carriers, including the *HMS Indefatigable*. There were several warnings of Japanese air attacks, but none materialized.

THOMAS T. OYLER, Company C

In the Ulithi lagoon, C Company's LST was anchored just astern the carrier *Franklin*, which had taken a direct *kamikaze* hit. The plane had gone through the flight deck to the hangar deck. Repairs necessary for a trip to Pearl Harbor for further

renovations were being made there at Ulithi.

Two or three ships from the British fleet were also there. I was shocked when three officers, all in white, arrived in the wardroom of the LST. They had come with an invitation to visit their ship. I was not one that went.

ROBERT A. FISH, Company A

At this time we could notice the damage being done by the *kamikaze* pilots. We anchored close to the carrier, *USS Franklin*, which had been hit and badly damaged. You could look right through her like a skeleton.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

We were promised liberty at Ulithi, but couldn't have it for lack of transportation.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

On Thursday, the 22d, I had communion given by an English chaplain from the battleship, *HMS King George V*. The British task force left Ulithi on Friday, the 23d.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

On Thursday, the 22d, some of us boarded the *HMS Indomitable*, where we had communion by a British chaplain. On our LSM, Father Redmond held Catholic services, and a gang of us guys talked with him after the service. Father Redmond was a legend among the Marines and was very well thought of by all. We had an air raid alert and blackout that night. In the next two days the British ships left the harbor, and I had a letter from Mom and Dad. Aboard our ship we had fresh water in the basins all of the time and fresh water showers at night, very uncommon when troops were aboard. We left Ulithi on the 25th.

ULITHI TO OKINAWA

Besides the fact that we were headed into combat, the most memorable feature of the journey to Okinawa was the stormy seas. First Armored men were used to the groaning and heaving of LSTs in heavy weather, but the rolling from side to side of LSMs was new. With their high superstructure off to starboard side, it was easy to wonder, with each starboard roll, whether or not it could right itself.

Going into a battle was never routine but, after two previous invasions, the pattern of final preparations—intelligence sessions, readying gear, loading ammunition, gassing up tanks—was very familiar. Even the anxieties were familiar. The last full day aboard ship, L-minus-1, was March 31. The Battalion had been seaborne for almost three weeks.

ROBERT A. FISH, Company A

Regrouped and resupplied, our convoy was off to Okinawa. The wind and sea were really churning. The LSTs were rolling so much you had to hang on to stay in a bunk. As I remember, Ed (Lt. Edward M.) Dooley and I were in the same stateroom. We heard this terrible noise and both rushed out on deck. The pontoons carried on the sides of the LST had been ripped away by the wind and waves.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

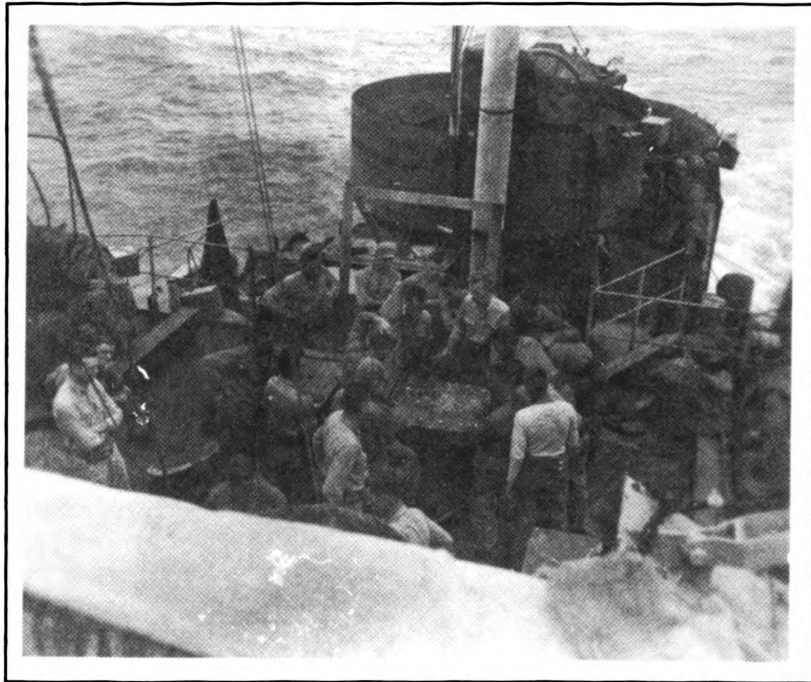
The seas were so rough that on March 28 our LST lost one of the pontoons lashed to its side. It calmed down the next day.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

After Ulithi the weather continued bad. From Radio Tokyo on March 28 we heard our first news of the U.S. Navy's bombing and shelling of Okinawa. We had a submarine alert all day on March 29, and floating mines were spotted in the water. On the day before the landing we were issued small arms ammunition.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

After Ulithi we had more briefings. We were issued .45-caliber ammo, hand grenades, and occupational money in yens and sens. On March 30 we gassed up the tanks. The weather was rough on most days, but on March 31, the day before L-Day, the skies cleared up and the sea grew calm. I was thinking of H-Hour the next day at 0830, when I would be on the beach of Okinawa—at least I hoped I would be.



Final orientation session. Capt. Theodore A. "Ted" Burge of Company D giving last instructions before the Okinawa landing. (Paul)

FRED ADDISON, Company A

The crossing from Ulithi to Okinawa was very rough. It rained constantly, and I found out later that we were on the fringes of a typhoon. Everyone was either in the

advance agonies of *mal de mer* or just felt plain lousy. I was one of the latter, and ate very light, maybe one or two sandwiches a day. Earl L. Gray got so sick he had to be fed with an IV in sick bay. One of our swabbie buddies was so bad that we peeled potatoes for him at his usual spot on deck near the stern. We didn't mind, for real potatoes were a treat; ours were always dehydrated ones. A lot of us slept topside, and it was wet and *rough*. I thought the storm would pitch us overboard sometimes. Remember these were small ships, 203 feet long by 34 feet wide, with a speed of only 12 knot.

As we neared Okinawa we squared away in general in the tanks. We were to leave everything behind on the ship except ammo, two water cans per tank, camouflage netting and artillery gear, packs, and weapons. We packed up our seabags to leave on the ship. We weren't supposed to take U.S. currency onto the island, so I had bought

\$6.00 worth of occupation money, though I couldn't see what the hell I would spend it on. I was right, for it turned out that I brought it all home.

Thursday, March 29, was the first day the sun had come out since we had left Ulithi, but Friday was cold, rainy, and rough. By Saturday, March 31, the day before the landing, we were in the South China Sea; the sea was calm and the sun was shining. Pretty much like a May day back home. The tanks were all gassed up and we



Capt. Ted Burge at the ship's rail the day before the Okinawa landing.
(Paul)

were raring to go. We drew personal ammo and grenades.

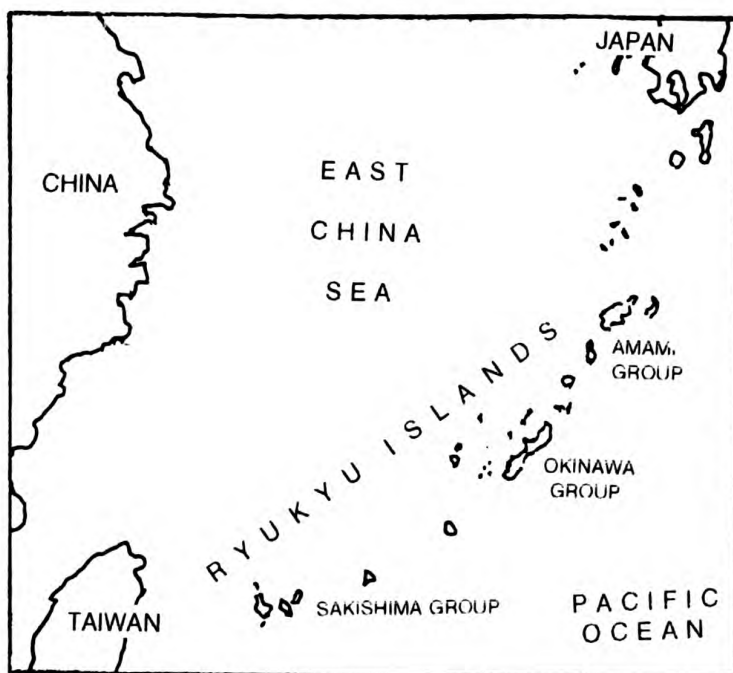
LOUIS METZGER. Battalion Commander

The voyage to Okinawa was the usual precombat experience: briefings, checking and rechecking of weapons and vehicles, studying intelligence and landing plans, letters home (and one special letter just in case you didn't make it), sleepless nights, religious services and, finally, L-Day.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

OKINAWA: THE LANDING & FIRST DAYS ASHORE

Though we did not realize it at the time, the American seizure of Okinawa from Japan was the last major battle of the war and virtually the last gasp of the Japanese empire. Okinawa is the principal island of the Ryukyu chain, a 600-mile arc of small



islands lying between Japan and Formosa (now called Taiwan). The Ryukyus consist of three groups, the Sakishima Islands to the southwest, the Okinawa Islands in the center, and the Amami Islands to the northeast. Much of the risk in striking at Okinawa, the very heart of the Ryukyus, lay in the fact that Japan controlled the Ryukyus, Formosa, and the coast of China, all bristling with airfields.

Okinawa is about 67 miles long and varies from two miles wide at the Ishikawa Isthmus to 18 miles wide at the Motobu Peninsula. Within its deeply indented coastline, the land area is 454 square miles. The northern two-thirds of the island is mountainous, heavily wooded, and thinly populated. The southern third, where most of the people live, has most of the agriculture despite the many low hills, cliffs, and ravines. The chief crops are sweet potatoes, sugar cane, and rice. The temperature on Okinawa is mild to

hot, ranging between the 40s and 80s. As the American invaders discovered, torrential rains prevail from May to September. Naha, with a good harbor and a population in the 1940s of over 60,000, was the Okinawan capital and the largest town in the Ryukyus.

The Okinawans have occupied the island since prehistoric times and are thought to be derived from both mainland and oceanic races. The population before the war was roughly half a million. Beginning in the sixth or seventh century, the island was raided intermittently by the Chinese, but retained its independence until 1368, when the Okinawan king acknowledged Chinese dominion. After that time Okinawa passed from Chinese suzerainty to a vague dual dependence on both China and Japan, and then



gradually to complete Japanese control. By World War II, the island was completely integrated into the Japanese political system. The native Okinawans had preserved most elements of their culture—language, religion, customs—but many had learned to speak Japanese, and a Japanese elite controlled most political, economic, and social activities. Japanese propaganda had largely convinced the native people that capture of the island by Americans would result in atrocities and massacres.

OKINAWA AND THE WAR

Since the reconquest of Guam, in which the First Armored was engaged, American and allied forces had made important advances in their drive toward Japan. By November 1944 airfields in the Marianas were in operation for B-29 bombers to make regular strikes against Japan itself. Even though it was later judged unnecessary, Peleliu and Angaur in the Palau Islands were taken in September 1944 so as to establish bomber bases from which to assault the Philippines. Ulithi Atoll, seized without opposition in September, provided the Navy an excellent anchorage to serve as a major advance base.

Through most of 1944 the U.S. continued to wage a two-pronged offensive, Nimitz in the Central Pacific, McArthur in the Southwest Pacific. There was no clear agreement on strategy for defeating the enemy. McArthur pressed hard for the earliest possible return to the Philippines, proceeding from there to targets closer to Japan. The Navy considered its drive across the Central Pacific to be aimed at invasions of Formosa and the Chinese coast, from which land-based bombers could operate. Not until a conference in San Francisco, September 29–October 1, 1944 was a decision made to bypass Formosa and make Luzon, Iwo, and Okinawa the next main objectives.

McArthur's forces landed on Leyte in the Philippines on October 20, 1944. In what has been described as the greatest naval battle in history, the remnants of the Japanese navy, in the Battle for Leyte Gulf, October 23-26, was practically eliminated as a force in the war. By challenging the American navy there, the Japanese lost four carriers, three battleships, and 27 other warships. Landings on other Philippine islands soon followed, and on January 9, 1945, the invasion of Luzon began. After a month of bitter fighting in Manila, the city finally fell to U.S. forces on March 3.

By targeting Iwo Jima and Okinawa, the U.S. and its allies sought to breach the last defense perimeter of the Japanese empire outside the homeland itself. Iwo in the Bonin Islands was only 660 miles from Tokyo. The attack on Iwo by the 4th and 5th Marine Divisions began on February 19, 1945, with the 3d Marine Division in reserve. In three weeks of fighting, over 5900 Marines died on Iwo and over 17,000 were wounded. The island was soon transformed into a fighter base for escorting B-29s in raids over Japan, and as a haven for crippled B-29s unable to return to base in the Marianas.

The attractions of Okinawa to American strategy planners were its proximity to Japan and its natural potential as a base for military operations. It lay only 360 miles

from Kyushu, the southernmost of the four main Japanese islands. It already had three working airfields—at Yontan, Kadena, and Naha—and two smaller airstrips. Two bays—Chimu Wan and Nakagusuku Wan—provided large anchorages for ships, and Naha had a small harbor. Okinawa's land mass was sufficient to support a large military build-up from which to launch an invasion of Japan.

But taking Okinawa could not be easy. Its proximity to Japan, expected to be a definite advantage *after* occupation, was a serious liability beforehand. Japanese war-planes could be launched from more than a hundred airfields in Kyushu, Formosa, and China, all in easy strike range of Okinawa. Because of its rugged topography, the island was highly defensible, and the Japanese had repeatedly demonstrated their skill and tenacity at defense. The Japanese 32d Army on Okinawa, under command of General Mitsuru Ushijima, numbered some 77,000 regular troops, reinforced by about 20,000 poorly trained Okinawan Home Guards and additional untrained conscripted Okinawans as a labor force.

THE BATTLE PLAN

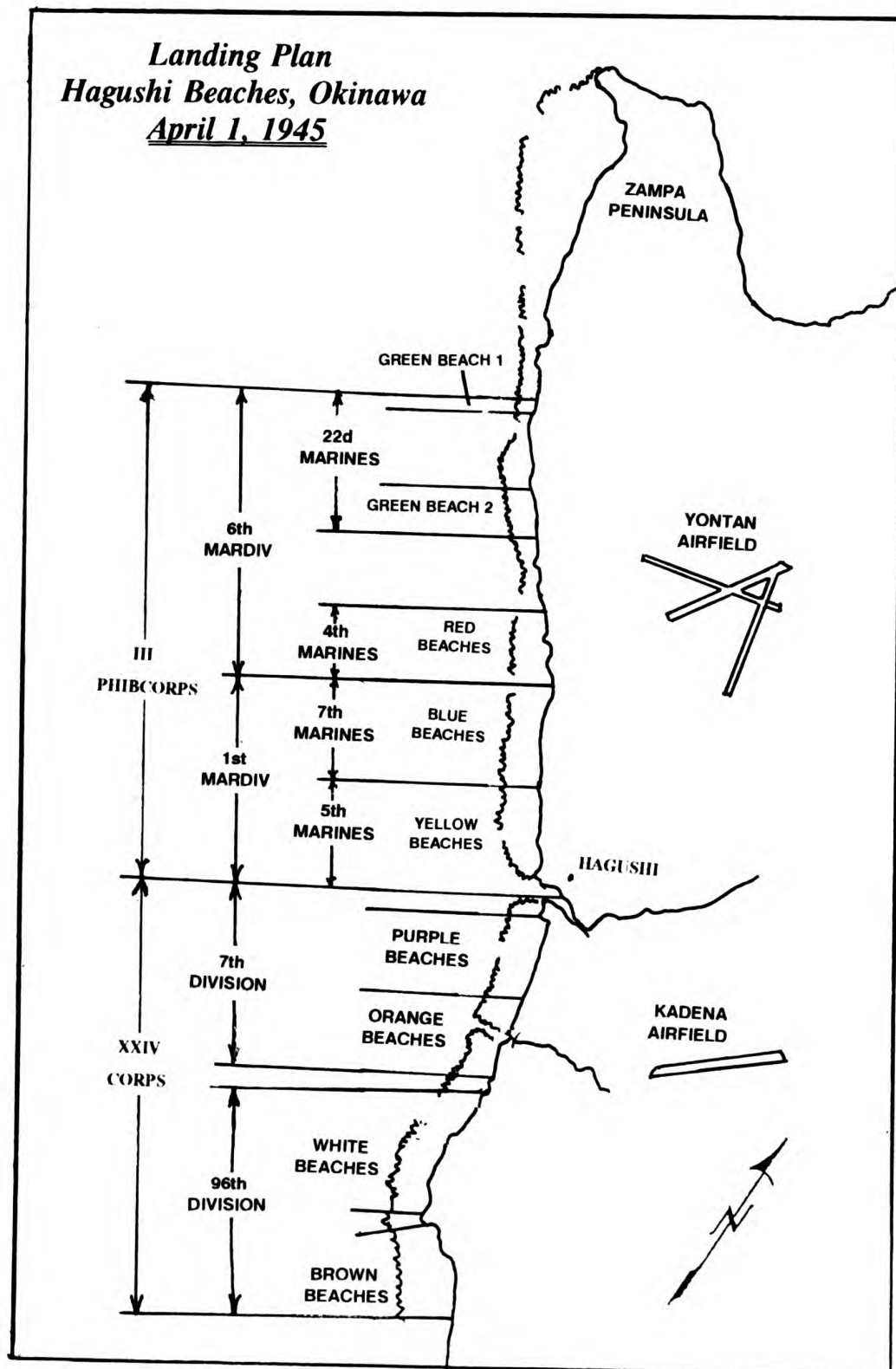
The invasion of Okinawa was code-named ICEBERG. In overall command of all forces in the area—U.S. and British—was Vice Admiral Raymond A. Spruance. Beginning in January 1945, carrier strikes—in addition to land-based B-29 raids—had been made against Formosa, China, Japanese home islands, and Okinawa itself to neutralize as many airfields as possible. It was in a raid on the home islands on March 18 that the *Franklin* and other carriers had been seriously damaged. The Navy's expeditionary force (Task Force 51) was under Vice Admiral Kelly (Raymond K.) Turner, who in turn reported to Admiral Spruance.

Operations ashore were to be conducted by the Tenth Army, the largest such force ever assembled in the Pacific War. Commanded by Army Lt. General Simon Bolivar Buckner, the Tenth Army comprised the Army's XXIV Corps and the Marine Corps' III Marine Amphibious Corps. The XXIV Corps consisted of the 7th, 77th, and 96th Divisions, with the 27th Division in reserve. The III Amphibious Corps included the 1st and 6th Marine Divisions for the main assault, and the 2d Marine Division to execute a diversionary feint off the southeastern shore of Okinawa. The First Armored Amphibian Battalion was attached to the 6th Marine Division.

Two preliminary landings were carried out prior to the main landing on Okinawa. On March 26 troops of the 77th Army Division landed in Kerama Retto, an island group off the southwest coast of Okinawa. Those islands were needed by the Navy as a logistical support base, where refueling, rearming, battle repairs, and rescue operations could be conducted. The entire group was secured by March 29. On March 31, a battalion of 77th Division troops occupied tiny Keise Shima, from which an Army artillery unit would fire its 155mm guns against targets on Okinawa.

Beginning on March 24, minesweeping operations began, and underwater demolition teams (UDTs) cleared reefs, and even beaches, of mines and other obstructions at

***Landing Plan
Hagushi Beaches, Okinawa
April 1, 1945***



the landing sites. In the last week before the landing the Navy maintained continuous and intense softening-up operations. The big ships bombarded, and carrier planes bombed and strafed, all known targets on Okinawa and nearby islands.

The main landing on Okinawa was scheduled for April 1. L-Day, as it was designated, happened to fall on Easter Sunday and also April Fools' Day. H-Hour was set at 0830. The landings would be on the western shore of Okinawa, on the Hagushi Beaches, so designated because of the nearby village of Hagushi.

These beaches were divided into sectors designated by colors, with the left flank generally to the north, the right flank eight miles to the south. Marines of the III Amphibious Corps (1st & 6th Marine Divisions) were to land to the left, the Army troops of the XXIV Corps (7th and 96th Divisions) to the right. In the 6th Marine Division, the 22d Marines were to hit farthest left, on Green Beaches 1 & 2, the 4th Marines to their right on three Red Beaches. The 7th and 5th Marines, of the 1st Division, were to take beaches designated Blue and Yellow. South and to the right of the Marines, the Army's 7th Division had Purple and Orange Beaches, the 96th Division White and Brown Beaches.

In the First Armored Amphibian Battalion, Companies C and D operated with the 22d Marines on the left flank, Companies A and B with the 4th Marines to the right. The 2d and 3d Platoons of Company D were assigned to Green Beach 1 on the left flank, Company C plus the 1st Platoon of Company D to Green Beach 2. Company B was assigned to Red Beach 1, Company C divided between Red Beaches 2 and 3.

While the real assault was in progress on the Hagushi beaches, the 2d Marine Division and the ships of Task Group 51.2 were to conduct a simultaneous "demonstration" landing off the Minatoga beaches on the southeast coast of Okinawa. This was a feint designed to divert enemy troops to that shore. Marines would actually disembark, form a line of departure, start for the beaches and then, at 0830, H-Hour at Hagushi, they would put about and return to their ships. The feint would be repeated on the second day.

After the Hagushi landings, the first objectives were to seize Yontan and Kadena airfields, then to cut the island in two at the Ishikawa Isthmus. From there the Marines would turn north to take the northern two-thirds of Okinawa, the Army would turn south.

THE LANDING

On L-Day troops aboard ship were up long before dawn. At 0406 Admiral Turner radioed the command, "Land the Landing Force." Men who came topside saw the red streaks and heard the thunder of an awesome naval bombardment of the Hagushi beach area, which had begun in the dark at about 0450. When daylight came, they could see the incredible armada of ships all about them. More than 1300 ships were engaged in the Okinawa invasion, the largest fleet ever assembled in the Pacific War. Pounding the

beach and targets behind it were 10 battleships, 12 cruisers, 23 destroyers, and 177 gunboats. The only reaction from the shore was some light artillery and mortar fire. There were, however, some scattered enemy air attacks at dawn.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

L-Day for Okinawa, April 1, 1945, was also Easter Sunday and April Fool's Day. The previous day aboard our LSM was a busy one for the Marines as we fine-tuned our weapons and equipment for the bloody amphibious landing we had been warned to expect. Arising early after a sleepless and prayerful night, we donned clean clothing, including underwear, to reduce the risk of infection from combat wounds. We enjoyed a hearty breakfast of steak and eggs, courtesy of our Navy hosts, and manned our vehicles.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

On the day of the landing we got up at about 0300, had a great breakfast of steak and eggs, all we could eat, and then went topside to ready our tanks and equipment. When I stepped into the open it was still dark, and what I saw made me want to go back down below. Thousands of red streaks were headed for the island from the ships at sea. I later learned that during the preinvasion bombardment the U.S. Navy fired 100,000 shells and rockets at Okinawa. The first thought that hit me was that God was mad at the world and we were about to get blown up, friend and enemy alike.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

On D-Day for Okinawa we stood topside waiting and wondering as we watched the terrific barrage being laid down by the battlewagons and cruisers. Our landing ships and the transports had taken positions off Hagushi, preparing to disgorge the assault waves of our amphibian tanks, the amphibian tractors, and other landing craft of the 1st and 6th Marine Divisions. Then our ship sounded a general quarters, and we wondered if we would be hit before even leaving the ship.

When the sun rose, I found it a beautiful sight. The breeze was just right because from the galley came the wonderful aroma of baking bread. It struck me because I knew what our menu would consist of for the next few weeks. Some things are nice under any circumstance: the sunrise was one, the smell of baking bread was another.

While we were standing at the rail, John Greene popped up, "Take a good look at that sun, men. It will be the last one for a lot of us." That was a crack that could have gone unsaid. Another Marine called out in jest, "Stay away, plane, stay away. My wife wants me back!" In all this Harold E. 'Bus' Jones just sat on a stack of cylinders reading. He had his pack on and was ready to do his job. No matter what the situation, some Marine was always reading.

WILLIAM MOIR, Company D

On board our ship they were playing "In Your Easter Bonnet." I had never seen so many ships.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

One episode on L-Day sticks with me. There was an observation plane, a float plane, that had probably been launched from a cruiser very near us. There were a lot of planes in the air, but as this one came back over the ships, some nervous sailors on an LST erred in identification and started firing at it. Soon several nearby LSTs were filling the sky with antiaircraft fire. Our LSM didn't, as we had told the sailors it was *our* plane. We were screaming and swearing at the ships doing the firing. Of course they couldn't miss this slow-moving plane, and it came down, crashing into the sea a few hundred yards from us. No one got out of the plane, and it sank. We were sick at what we had just seen.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

A very unfortunate incident occurred while we were watching the bombardment. A cruiser hoisted an observation seaplane (OS2U) over the side, from which it attempted to take off over the LST area. The Navy Commodore broadcast over the TBS (Talk Between Ships) radio network, "DO NOT, REPEAT, DO NOT FIRE ON THAT AIRPLANE." The aircraft had just got airborne when it flew over the LSTs at several hundred feet of altitude. In spite of the order, a machine gun opened fire, soon to be followed by dozens of other guns. The plane fell in flames and crashed almost alongside of our ship. The Commodore came on the air and said, "You have just killed two Americans. I hope you are satisfied." The incident resulted from the tense nerves that are present just before a landing, too many uncontrolled guns mounted at random on the decks of LSTs for additional antiaircraft protection, and the lack of a workable fire control system.

Just before the landing it was reported on the flagship by the Navy UDT (Underwater Demolition Teams) that there were no Japanese defenders or emplacements on the landing beaches. The Navy frogmen reported they had walked on the beaches and were positive they were not defended. This, however, was countered by reports from an observer in a boat from the Division G-2 Section (Intelligence) that enemy had been observed on the beaches. Following the tried and true military maxim, "Give the enemy his worst capability," the landing proceeded with the expectation that the beaches were defended.

DEBARKATION

At 0650 carrier planes began bombing and strafing the Hagushi Beaches. In the course of the morning 500 planes would work the ground ahead of advancing troops. At 0700, the amtracs disembarked from the landing ships—LSTs, LSMs, and LSDs—and moved off toward the line of departure. So did the amtracs, loaded with infantrymen

who would make up the first waves, following the amtanks. Other troops climbed off transports into LCVPs and DUKWs, for transfer into LVTs later, at the edge of the reef.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

The command came, "Man your tanks," and we went down to the tank deck. When the engines were running and the deck was full of exhaust fumes because the blowers didn't do a good job, it was hard to breathe. Jim (James C.) Gamble gave out dimes again, as he had done on the Guam invasion, one to each member of the 1st Platoon. Everybody sure looked funny down there. They had given us some kind of a flash-burn salve to put on exposed parts. We had on flak suits, pistols, canteens, jungle kits, and knives. The flak suits were something new on this campaign.

The light turned green, and the first of our tanks went down the ramp and out of the open jaws of the LST, followed by the rest.



The line of departure. First Armored amtanks off the Hagushi Beaches, Okinawa, April 1, 1945. (Paul)

The minute we were in the water, radio contact was made and we headed for the line of departure. In the cargo compartment Bus Jones was reading! As for me, I would have given anything to get out of that landing.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

We started our engines and prepared to leave the ship. The LSM bow opened up and we were on our way. At that point we were almost two miles at sea.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

The order finally came to man our vehicles, and I left the bridge and went to the tank deck. I must admit that I wondered if on this operation, my luck had run out. My legs did not seem to want to carry me to my command vehicle. On this operation we had been issued protective cream to guard against flash burn and individual flak suits

(light weight and easily removed) which had been designed for B-29 crews. After smearing my face and getting into my gear, I looked around and found the tank commanders and gunners were looking at me. This was the time to show utter unconcern, so I lit a cigar (strictly illegal) and gave them a big wave. It seemed to relax everyone and we were ready to go. Shortly afterward we launched down the ramps and were waterborne and moving to the line of departure.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

The Naval armada off Okinawa's west coast was overwhelming—a veritable forest of masts from horizon to horizon. Our amtanks unloaded from the LSMs and LSTs outside the lines of battleships and cruisers, with the result that our tanks maneuvered



The run to the beach. Company D amtanks moving toward the Green Beaches, Okinawa, April 1, 1945. (Paul)

between those mighty vessels on our way to the beach and underwent the ordeal of traveling at close quarters under their huge guns for some distance. From this vantage point, when a salvo was fired from a 16-inch turret, the several projectiles, flying in close formation toward targets on the beach, were visible to the naked eye for several seconds. The muzzle blasts from these fearsome rifles were awesome and uncomfortable to the troops as we passed in close proximity, but we applauded the results on

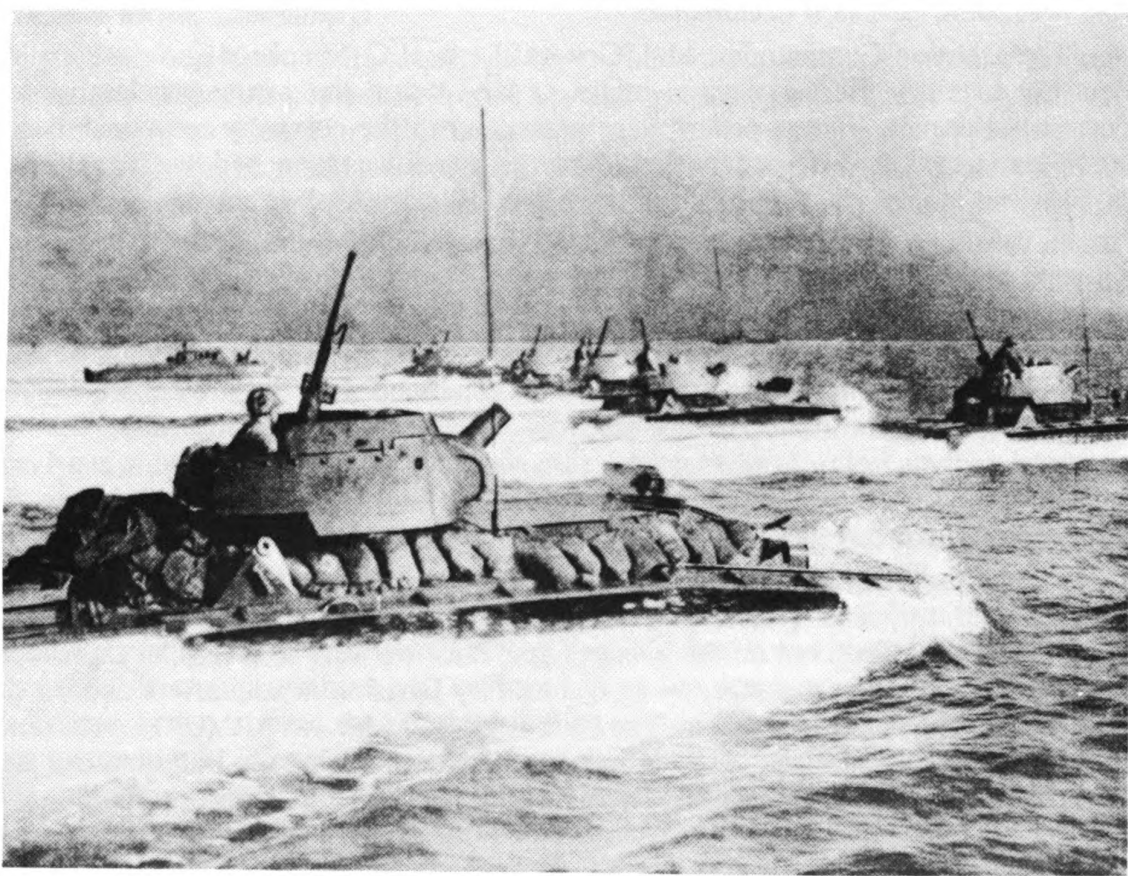
the beach.

THE RUN TO THE BEACH

Amphibious landings against hostile shores could never be routine. Uncertainty for life and limb was always there. But the Navy and Marine Corps, after many amphibious assaults, had refined the procedures to something of a standard. This landing was much like earlier ones, but smoother and on a larger scale. In the First Armored we were aware that LVTAs were being used to much better advantage than at Kwajalein, just sixteen months earlier.

Eight miles of amtanks and troop-laden amtracs maneuvered into position at the

line of departure, 4000 yards from shore. At 0800 the control boats signaled, and all landing vehicles began moving toward the beaches. There was some confusion causing troops to head for wrong beaches, confusion which has since then been attributed officially to inexperienced wave guides. Company C and D amtanks moved toward the Green Beaches in advance of the first waves of the 22d Marines, Company A and B to the Red Beaches, leading the 4th Marines. Passing between the LCI gunboats and the furious barrage of their guns and rockets, the LVTAs took up the responsibility for laying down fire on the beaches. The weather was good, and there were no surf problems. Because of high tide, the tanks were waterborne as they crossed the reef. From the enemy no real opposition! —only a scattering of ineffectual fire from mortars and small arms. Firing howitzers and machine guns at all likely targets, First Armored amtanks reached their assigned beaches at times ranging from 0832 to 0837, without loss of men or tanks.



Assault. First Armored LVT(A)-4s head for Green and Red Beaches, Okinawa, April 1, 1945. (Paul)

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

The control vessels marked the lines of departure for each assault unit. At 0800, after the waves had formed behind the line of departure, the control vessels dropped their signal pennants, and we raced towards the beaches. That assault wave was something like eight miles flank to flank. Just in front of us were the LCI gunboats firing rockets and 40mm guns, blanketing the landing area for 1000 yards inland. When they reached the reefs, the gunboats turned aside and we passed through them and continued on. We then took over the firing with our 75mm howitzers and machine guns, firing directly ahead at targets of opportunity on the beach. Following behind us at regular intervals were hundreds of troop-laden LVTs, some six waves deep. When naval gunfire lifted, carrier planes laid down a smoke screen and began diving on the landing area with bombing and strafing runs. At 0835 we hit the beach, five minutes late and, I guess, a little off our assigned Beach Red 1.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

The Division Commander, Maj. General Lemuel C. Shepherd, gave me explicit orders not to allow the Navy wave guides to land us on the wrong beaches, as had occurred in the past. These orders were passed on to the company commanders and platoon leaders, along with orders that, once the attack was launched, we would never turn away, no matter what occurred. Guam was still very fresh in our memories.

In the Guam landing, during the assault phase, I had not been able to observe or control the Battalion from my low-in-the-water LVTA. As a result I had arranged to tie my command LVTA to the stern of one of the LCI(G)s and ride the initial part of the movement to the beach on that ship. Bad Idea! Again the smoke and dust blowing offshore from the Naval gunfire and air strikes, combined with the smoke and exhaust from the rockets of the LCI(G), kept me from seeing anything. I must admit that the roar of the rockets being fired from the ship was unnerving. I was glad when I was informed the ship was turning away from the beach and I could climb back into the command vehicle and get moving to the beach. We touched down on Okinawa at 0837.

During the movement to the beach I had Sergeant Jean L. Baker, my command tank radio operator, send a series of messages on the Division Command radio net that no enemy could be observed on the beaches and, once we were ashore, that there were no enemy present. The messages were received by Division headquarters aboard the flagship, but there was one problem. The staff wondered who was ARMORPLATE, sending all this important information. Unfortunately we were using my Battalion call sign and not the call sign assigned by the Division. So much for timely information!

GEORGE F. ROBERTS, Company D

On the way in from the line of departure we passed an LSM(R) that must have been solid rockets topside. They started firing off salvos, and it looked like the whole ship was blowing up. What a show of fireworks!. All of us in the D-18 crew took off

our flak jackets as soon as we left the ship because we figured we would rather be shot than drowned. We just barely had freeboard anyway due to the full complement of ammunition, fuel, supplies, etc. When we came down the ramp and the bow went under, we just hoped it would come back up again.

WILLIAM F. COWGILL, Company B

During the Okinawa landing I was the driver on B-5. The tank was overloaded on the port side as we formed the first wave to strike the island. As we started in, our tank would only go left, so we headed back out to sea as Company B was heading toward the beach. After a few kind words from Lieutenant (Irwin Ronald) Buckner over the radio, and after considerable shifting of ammunition, we finally straightened things out and joined our group. It looked initially like we were deserting and heading out to sea, back to the fleet.

WILLIAM MOIR, Company D

They laid down quite a barrage for us, but we couldn't see anything through all the smoke. Our line got a little fouled up, and when we got to about 400 yards off the beach, we were ordered to right flank. We had been headed for the wrong beach. We moved south about a half mile and started in for the beach again. I don't know who fouled up, but the new beach had very little fire hitting it, and my heart was in my mouth. Coming through the smoke, all I could see through the sights on the 75mm was a black cliff. I shot about ten high-explosive rounds into it. I saw some tracers hitting the beach, but I couldn't find the target.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

Soon our tanks were in front of everyone else and we commenced firing. Because our platoon leader, Lieutenant Charles F. "Speed" spilman had chosen A-10 as his command tank a few weeks previous, I had moved out of the turret and was serving as ammo passer. I had a hatch open so that I could catch a glimpse every once in a while of what was going on. I was also throwing the empty brass shell casings from the howitzer through the hatch and over the side as they were ejected from the gun. I didn't want to be stumbling over them. I wasn't sure whether it was machine gun fire we were receiving or empty machine gun casings hitting the water around us from our planes overhead as they strafed the beach. Looking toward the shore as we got closer, I could see a stone-and-cement seawall stretching the length of our landing area. I could also see there was no way to proceed inland *except* through one narrow opening in the seawall. I don't remember if the opening had been caused by one of our bombs or if it was designed so the natives could get down to the sea at that point. In any case, I could immediately visualize every Jap gun on the island concentrated on that one narrow opening! It was at this point that I suddenly got very afraid, manifested by an uncontrollable urge to urinate about every thirty seconds. From the guts of the tank I would hand up a shell, and then Joe (Joseph L.) Campbell and Harry J. Broderick would

load it, fire, and eject the brass casing. The hot empty casing would clatter down to my area. I'd hand up another shell, pick up an empty brass casing, release some urine into it, and heave it out the opened hatch into the sea. I just knew we'd be blown to pieces in another few minutes when we would have to be the first vehicle through that seawall opening. Well, at approximately 0835 we went through it, and all was well. I couldn't believe our good fortune.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

From the line of departure it was nerve-racking. We had a hard time trying to stay in formation. The coral wasn't too bad, just rough in spots. We hit Red Beach 1 at 0835.

ON THE BEACH AND BEYOND

It was too good to be true! Enemy defense of the beaches, when there was any at all, was light and sporadic. Everyone, even the high command, was surprised and relieved. The immediate speculation was that the feint off the Minatoga beaches had really fooled the enemy into pulling all his forces to that area. That was not the case. While the feint did draw and hold some enemy forces on those beaches, the lack of defense on the Hagushi beaches was evidence of a late-developing Japanese strategy in island defense. General Ushijima, the island commander, rejected the old Japanese strategy of fighting to the death on the beaches. He gave up the beaches and withdrew his forces to highly defensible positions, some to northern Okinawa, but most to the southern parts of the island. He thus planned to conserve his forces, and also hoped that kamikazes could so ravage the fleet offshore that it would retreat, leaving the invading troops stranded ashore without supplies. The defense of the Hagushi area and its nearby airfields had been left largely in the hands of Okinawan home guard and conscripts.

Ironically, more casualties were inflicted on the forces executing the feint off the Minatoga beaches than on the real invasion at Hagushi. Kamikaze planes struck that force while the operation was in progress and damaged a transport and an LST.

Even though the narrow beaches were undefended, the landing Marines did not know what resistance might be waiting ahead. Naval shelling had breached the seawalls in many places, enabling Marine infantry to move inland quickly. Some of these exits from the beach were narrow enough and steep enough to cause problems for the amtanks. Once clear of the beaches, and it became possible to stop and look around, the tank crews were astonished to see no enemy, but a terrain of cultivated fields and green hillsides, beautiful in the bright sunlight of a spring day.

The First Armored was committed, till land tanks could come ashore, to supporting the infantry in their advance inland. Five amtank platoons moved with the infantry to the edge of Yontan Airfield. There one platoon remained to cover the further advance of infantry and LVTAs. The other four, with the infantry, crossed the airfield.

One of these platoons, at the request of the infantry, proceeded into the village of China. Resistance at the airfield was the most encountered that day, but was still light. General Ushijima had left Yontan and Katena airfields with a minimum defense, but had not intended they should fall into American hands in relatively good condition. U.S. forces had seized in one day two airfields they had not expected to take till the third day. When land tanks arrived, the LVTAs at Yontan Airfield returned in early afternoon to their respective beach areas for artillery work.

DONALD SCHARF, Company D

Unbelievably we landed unopposed, without being fired upon. We were dumbfounded and greeted each other with "Happy Easter" and "Happy April Fools' Day."

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

When we got to the beach we stopped the tank, opened the hatches and looked around. We had fired so many shells that the air was thick with black dust. Our face, nose and ears were covered with the stuff. Dog Company's 2d and 3d Platoons landed and secured Green Beach One. In our 3d Platoon area we could see no enemy troops in sight, a scary feeling, knowing they were out there somewhere.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

B Company hit Red Beach 1 on Okinawa. We had been warned of an escarpment about 100 yards inland, about ten to fifteen feet high, and in a few minutes after hitting the beach, we were hung up on a sandbank. Again tank driver Steve Marusky really earned his money. B. P. (Bernard P.) Simmons, 1st Platoon's platoon sergeant, was yelling over the radio, literally pleading for him to get the tank moving. Steve was trying everything. I asked Simmons if we were being fired on, but received no reply. From his pleading I sure thought we were. I had by this time stopped firing the .30-caliber. The infantry had landed and we were moving up, but the progress was slow and rough. We were soaked with sweat, and the concussion from the 75mm was horrible. Simmons was trying to find a way up the rugged bank just before Yontan Airfield, stopping at times to fire on pillboxes.

There were no Japs! Resistance was non-existent. Finally we made it up the bank and were on the edge of the airfield. Lining up with the infantry, we slowly moved across, firing all the way. Reaching the other side, we stopped. No opposition! Yontan had been secured by 1100 hours.

I climbed out of the tank and, looking around, saw there was not a fallen Marine anywhere. The land was dry with green conifers and other vegetation so different from the swamps, savannahs and palm trees found in the tropics. Even the air was somewhat cool and bracing. Wonder of wonders, it seemed the entire Okinawa landing had taken place with surprising ease, against little or no enemy gunfire, and no troops, mines or obstacles on the beach. We felt that, if it was Easter Sunday, it was also April Fool's

Day, and wondered what trick the enemy was playing, in what manner had the Japanese baited this trap, for it had to be a trap of some sort.

As we waited on the airfield, the infantry around us were also taking it easy. The medium (land) tanks were expected soon. I had just taken off my flak jacket and was sitting down on the bow of the tank, when Charles W. Martin on the bow of the tank just to our right fell to the ground. I guess he had been hit in the knee. He was our first casualty of Love-Day on Okinawa. We stayed down after that.

At 1230 we were relieved by medium tanks, left the airfield, and returned to our beach area to set up as artillery.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

It was rough climbing a steep bank on the beach. There was no opposition, but we kept firing at pillboxes. We advanced and supported the infantry all the way to and across Yontan Airfield, still with no opposition, even this far inland. We continued firing all the time at probable targets and giving overhead fire. At the other side of Yontan Airfield we were relieved at 1230 by medium tanks.



A First Armored amtank on Yontan Airfield, Okinawa, April 1, 1944 (Tremblay)

DONALD C. HOUSTON, Company B

Where B Company landed on Red Beach 1 on Okinawa, we ran up against earth embankments about 20 feet high right in front of the landing area. Because of the rapid pile-up, we were slowed down in getting off the beach. One tank made it over the embankment, but most of us had to work along the beach to find a low spot. When my crew did get off the beach, we went on up the long incline to the edge of Yontan airfield by ourselves. There were only infantry there. At the request of an officer we fired some rounds into some buildings on the opposite side of the airfield. Later we joined up with the other crews which had begun to arrive.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

We hurriedly got clear of the beach area and started up a long incline. The other tanks came through and, thank God, the riflemen of the 4th Marines. We were all looking quizzically at one another as we advanced up the slope, meeting no opposition. There were just a few scattered small trees and some grass on the hillside, but no enemy fire. What a wonderful April Fool's joke that was! My outfit advanced onto Yontan Airfield, reaching it between 1000 and 1030 hours. I don't believe A-10 had any targets to fire on after going through the seawall. The infantry was going forward like crazy too, but cautiously.

ROBERT A. FISH, Company A

Colonel Metzger gave me the assignment on L-Day to act during the landing as a bird dog for an Army colonel from the Army General Staff. We hit the beach, and off he went running up the hill toward Yontan Airfield. I was right behind him with my Tommy gun. Every cave we came to, he would start yelling in Japanese. I asked what he was saying. It was "Come out of there you S.O.B.'s or we will blow you out." I would lob a grenade in the cave, and we would take off. After a couple of hours of this, and being pretty close to the top of the ridge near Yontan Airfield, he got tired of this bull, went back to the beach, and released me to report back to Colonel Metzger. I was sure glad because I figured he would have got me killed sooner or later. We saw not one single living Jap during this two or three hours. Damn lucky!

ARTILLERY WORK AND BEACH DEFENSE

Having completed its amphibious assault, and the advance inland to Yontan, the First Armored was prepared to initiate its new mission as field artillery. Demonstrating the advantage of having artillery actually come ashore in the beach assault, eight batteries were registered by 1100 on L-Day and, with the return of amtanks from Yontan Airfield, the other four by 1300. The equivalent of an artillery regiment was thus in a short time set up and ready to work with artillery forward observers. As it turned out, the infantry advanced so rapidly, in the absence of serious resistance, that no fire missions were ordered or executed. The 15th Marines, the 6th Marine Division's artillery

regiment, had come ashore by 1530. To coordinate artillery work the First Armored tied in to that regiment's telephone and radio net. But no further fire strikes by First Armored batteries were called while the Battalion remained in the Hagushi area, though there were several alerts. In accordance with the battle plan, forces of the 6th Marine Division were moving—very fast—into the northern part of Okinawa. After April 3 the infantry had moved beyond the effective range of the Battalion's 75mm howitzers, and artillery work in the landing area ended.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

Once ashore we quickly found egresses from the beach and supported the attacking infantry by direct fire. With no enemy resistance, however, we were soon released to assume our artillery role. It worked like a charm. The batteries were surveyed in and registered by the forward observers; the infantry had artillery support within thirty minutes. Several hours later the regular artillery was ashore, and we were tied into their fire control nets. By sunset the Division forward elements had seized Yontan Airfield and controlled an area which the operation plan estimated would be taken only by the third day. Some scattered shots were fired by Japanese stragglers, and a few natives were encountered. Dummy positions, decoy aircraft, a few defensive positions, and ammunition were overrun.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

The First Armored was set up as artillery support, but the infantry moved so fast our support was not needed. As a point of interest, I believe this was the first time in military history that artillery support accompanied infantry on the first wave.

KAMIKAZES THE FIRST NIGHT

As night approached on L-Day, the crews began setting up for beach defense. First Armored that night witnessed for the first time the spectacle of kamikaze planes attacking the offshore fleet and the furious antiaircraft barrage from ships fighting desperately to repel them. This strike was not the first nor the heaviest kamikaze attack, but the battleship *West Virginia*, two transports, and an LST were damaged. The greatest danger to troops ashore was "friendly" fire, ack-ack fragments landing in the bivouac areas.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

That afternoon my platoon was sent back from Yontan, just back over the crest of the hill overlooking the sea. We set up as an artillery battery in case we were needed for fire support that night. We weren't. We attempted to dig foxholes, but it was all coral rock and we couldn't get any deeper than four or five inches. In late afternoon some Jap planes streaked in between the sea and us. They were after the ships offshore and also strafed the beach area. The Navy started shooting at them and, as we were on a higher elevation than the planes, we found ourselves in the Navy's line of fire. Their

shell fire was landing all around us. As soon as that excitement died down, we wasted no time in trying to dig deeper into the ground. We only got another three to five inches, but sure put some sandbags around every foxhole. It was cold as hell that night, but we had no other excitement. At daybreak, however, more Jap planes streaked in, and the Navy let us have it again. Suicide planes crashed into four ships offshore.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

It was quiet on the beach, and we were delighted at our easy landing and the beauty of Okinawa—green countryside dotted with stone tombs, wild lilies growing in profusion and, best of all, no enemy. We settled in for the night, with adequate security, and waited for the next day's advance. One unfortunate Marine, from another unit, was found dead the next morning. He had been hit by either mortar or artillery fire and, although he had put on a tourniquet, it was below his wound and he had bled to death.

DONALD SCHARF, Company D

On our first night after the Okinawa landing there was a Jap air raid against the Navy ships offshore. Nevertheless, the ships continued to fire shells into the hills, salvo after salvo. I watched the fuse trains of the shells, curving inland to the targets, as they made beautiful red arcs in the dark. The orange and red tracer bullets from the anti-aircraft guns also made pretty patterns.

THOMAS T. OYLER, Company C

After Yontan Airfield had been secured, I sat with Bill (Captain William L.) Eubanks on the side of a hill at the Company C office in the entrance of a tomb. There we watched wave after wave of Japanese planes diving, bombing and strafing the support ships offshore. The kamikazes hit some ships. A number of times I thought they were trying for a hospital ship, but I didn't see any direct hits on it.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

After being relieved by the medium tanks at Yontan, we quickly set up as artillery batteries. But no missions were received, and at 1600 hours we moved to Beach Red 1 and set up beach defenses for the night. It was cold that first night, like Minnesota in December. There was a thin slice of moon that appeared silvery and fairy-like and lit up the China Sea in a kind of halftone. Three of us, Harold E. Jones, Stephen Marusky, and I, nestled under the bow of our tank. The machine gun sat about three yards from our feet with Paul L. Harris on watch.

GEORGE F. ROBERTS, Company D

The first night I took a watch with one of my crew with a .50-caliber, watching for possible counterattacks by boat. It was so cold up there in the temperate zone I tried to use a camouflage net for a coat, but without much success.

DAY TWO THROUGH DAY FIVE

From the afternoon of April 1, L-Day, through Friday, April 5, the routine for First Armored men was artillery duty by day and beach defense by night. This fairly quiet period provided an opportunity to look around at the countryside, so different from jungly, tropical, Guadalcanal. Okinawan natives began to venture into the open, surprised that, contrary to propaganda, Americans would not abuse them. Our men were intrigued by the numerous Okinawan tombs—attractive stone structures set in the sides of hills—and found them interesting, exotic, and *safe*. The Japanese had occupied them for protection from naval bombardment. We now found them a haven from naval anti-aircraft flak and safe places to set up radio maintenance stations.

Air raids, both by kamikazes and conventional planes, continued, but not till the night of April 6-7 was the first massive strike staged. The First Armored was relieved from its duty on the Hagushi beaches at noon on Thursday, April 5. Companies A and B left the area on the 6th, C and D on the 7th.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

The next day the attack continued toward the east coast as the Marines attempted to cut Okinawa in half. A company from the 4th Marines was pinned down in a ravine by fierce enemy small arms fire. The mouth of the ravine was blocked by a rice paddy so that land tanks could not go to their rescue. I was asked to see if LVTAs could traverse the paddy and, to do that, I went forward along the side of the ravine. The enemy kept up small arms fire, and it was necessary to move rapidly from cover to cover. Unfortunately the paddy did not have enough water in it to permit our vehicles to float, and the mud and muck would have belied us up. We could not help.

From our Battalion command post in the area of Green Beach we could observe enemy aircraft in the kamikaze attacks on offshore shipping. Except for a few indirect fire missions, it was a quiet few days for us; we didn't know of the real battle that lay ahead.

WILLIAM MOIR, Company D

In the first few days the Okinawa invasion was almost like a maneuver. Civilians started coming out of the hills. The men just walked along, while the women, all half naked, carried all the gear on their heads and had babies strapped to their backs. They were odd looking people, and were very small.

We moved to Green Beach Two, where we saw quite a few Jap air attacks and a few ships get hit. The Japs were fanatics, diving right for the ships.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

On the second day ashore we set up in battery positions, but received no missions. On April 3 and 4, we were still at beach defense or in battery position and were starting to get our first look at a few civilians. They were friendly, but a pathetic sight. After

four days I finally got to wash my face and hands. I caught and tied to the tank a cute little goat, even though I hadn't the faintest idea what I would do with him.

We had a chance to look over some of the many tombs set in the sides of hills and cliffs. They were horseshoe-shaped burial vaults where the Okinawans kept the bones of their dead in urns. Neatly kept, the vaults were about 10 feet by 10 feet inside and about six feet high. Inside one vault we found a coffin made of wooden slats containing the body of a recently dead Okinawan, whose bones would eventually be transferred to the urns.

In mid afternoon on April 6 the sounds of many guns could be heard offshore, the heavens filled with ack-ack, and dark gray puffs appeared. Kamikaze pilots were attacking our ships at anchor, and ashore we had a fairly good view of the happenings. But also on shore the troops were subjected to a deadly rain of antiaircraft shell fragments. Some of our First Armored men were wounded. That evening the kamikazes came again. Even though we had settled nicely, we had to sit up to watch. The sky lit up with bright, star-like ack-ack spangles dancing crazily in the sky.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

For the first four days after L-Day we set up in daytime as artillery and at night for beach defense on Red Beach One. We saw a few pathetic-looking civilians in a stockade, and about nine Jap prisoners. Some of us went sightseeing and looked over Yontan Airfield and walked through a small village. We entered a few of the tombs characteristic of this island. They were made mostly in the sides of hills, and inside were jugs and vases full of human bones.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

If one could forget it was a combat zone, Okinawa was a very pretty country with green hills and farm land. Land was so scarce for farming that just about every nook and cranny had something edible growing on it. The island was spotted with tombs for the dead. They looked like large concrete caves, and we used them for shelter to perform maintenance and repair work on communication equipment.

Soon after the landing a Battalion camp was established near our original landing area. A civilian internment camp was set up nearby. We saw people working in the fields, gathering any produce they might find. It was a pretty sad looking situation. On the kamikaze raids those suicide pilots, knowing they were on a one-way ride, threw caution to the winds and started to dive for the ships on station off the beach. Two ships that I know of were hit and burning. Several of the kamikaze aircraft were destroyed.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

I don't remember anything about our second day ashore on Okinawa except that near nightfall I decided that the safest place to be for the night was inside one of

the elaborate tombs that were on the hillsides. I don't know if it was because of rain, or for protection from our Navy's shooting, or that it sure beat digging holes. About four of us from the A-10 squad moved into a tomb. It was about six feet high inside, maybe twelve feet wide, and went back into the hill perhaps fifteen feet. It was carved into the rock and had a flat, level floor. We cautiously searched it for snakes before we relaxed. At the far end of the cave was a raised alcove, with several elaborate pottery jars. Some of these were as much as 30 inches tall, some as small as 14 inches, and had painted, glazed designs. I imagine some could be valuable collector's items. I thought maybe the family jewels were hidden in them or a cache of gold coins. I crawled back there and removed the lid from one of the richest-looking ones. God, what a surprise! The jar was full of bones, including a skull. I checked a few others with the same result. I think most of the troops treated the jars with respect, but a hell of a lot of the tombs were destroyed.

JOHN F. KELLY, Company D

A few days after our easy landing on Okinawa, a war correspondent came to our tank. He wanted to know our names, where we came from, and what our opinion was about Okinawa. This was about April 6 or 7, and I suppose at that time I did tell him that it was a snap. According to the correspondent, that's what I said. To my amazement my wife sent me a clipping out of a May 25 St. Paul paper with a headline, "Okinawa Campaign is 'Snap', St. Paulite Says." Well, we made it alive off that island by the skin of our teeth.

WILLIAM D. GERMAIN, Company A

We found some chickens, and it wasn't long before we had roast chicken. The Lieutenant had said we weren't to eat anything that came from the island. So we didn't give him any. From our position, quite high, we could watch kamikaze raids on the ships. I was glad I was on land.

CHAPTER
FOURTEEN

Okinawa: Northern Operations

The First Armored Amphibian Battalion remained in positions on Red and Green Beaches for less than a week, and was then ordered to northern Okinawa to continue its support of the fast-moving 6th Marine Division. In those first days after L-Day, with an almost total lack of resistance, American forces had crossed to Okinawa's eastern shore, thus cutting the island in two at its narrow waist, the Ishikawa Isthmus. Whatever forces the Japanese had north and south of the isthmus were isolated from each other. Within the week, both Yontan and Kadena airfields had been put back into operation.

The Army's XXIV Corps had moved rapidly south, but was beginning to encounter heavy resistance. The 1st Marine Division, was mopping up on the east coast and working its way through the Katchin Peninsula. The 6th Marine Division, to which the First Armored was attached, had moved rapidly north and was engaged in sealing off the Motobu Peninsula from the rest of Okinawa.

It was still not clear to the U.S. commanders why the Japanese had not defended the beaches and the important airfields. Neither were they clear on the strength and disposition of Japanese forces. They were soon to learn that Lt. General Mitsuru Ushijima, commander of Japanese forces on Okinawa, had abandoned the usual Japanese strategy of defending beaches to the death, and was concentrating his 32d Army strength in highly defensible positions inland. These, as the Americans would learn, were mainly in southern Okinawa, but also with small forces in the north, mostly on Motobu Peninsula. Japanese forces numbered about 67,000 army troops, 9,000 navy men, and 24,000 Okinawan conscripts. Okinawa would not long be counted as an easy operation.

NORTH TO YABU

By late in the day on April 3, infantry regiments of the 6th Marine Division had advanced beyond the effective range of the First Armored's 75mm howitzers. On Friday, April 6, the men and tanks of Companies A and B on the Red Beaches were



moved by LST from the Hagushi area to Nakama, a coastal village on Nago Wan (Nago Bay). At first it was considered possible that from that location amphibious landings or artillery support might be called for, but neither was required. Two First Armored batteries of artillery were laid but, because of the positions of Marine troops in the area, were not registered. The next day, Companies C and D, on the Green Beaches, were also transported by LST to Nakama. All amtkank crews bivouacked on the beach there, two nights for A and B Companies, one night for C and D Companies. All units were standing by for orders to fire as artillery or to move forward.

It was on April 6, while A and B Companies were en route to Nakama and C and D Companies were still at the Green Beaches, that the Japanese launched their first all-out air attack against the offshore American fleet. Code-named *Kikusui-1* (meaning Floating Chrysanthemum 1), this offensive was on a much greater scale than previous attacks, which had been sporadic in nature. There

would be nine other *Kikusui* operations. *Kikusui-1* involved about 900 Japanese planes, over a third of them kamikazes. The Japanese suffered heavy losses, but on April 6 the Navy lost three destroyers, two ammunition ships, and an LST, with at least eight other ships damaged. On the 7th, the attack continued, with hits on the battleship *Maryland*, the carrier *Hancock*, and two destroyers.

On Sunday, April 8, all amtkanks of the Battalion moved by water, under their own power, from Nakama, across Nago Wan, to the village of Yabu, on the south shore of Motobu Peninsula. In Yabu, six batteries were quickly laid and registered, ready for fire missions. Coordinated with the move by sea, some elements of the Battalion—motor transport, headquarters units, and others—moved by road from the Hagushi area to

Yabu. Though it took some time to get established, Yabu would become the First Armored's home for about three weeks, a time spent at artillery work *in* camp and assorted amphibious missions *out* of camp.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

On April 6 we broke camp at 0800 and boarded LST 1030. While aboard I took my first shower since L-Day. The ship moved north along the coast and let us out near a beach close to a fairly large village [Nakama], which was partially ruined and burned. We set up a bivouac, and stood by to be used as artillery. At night some of the men on machine gun watch fired at what they believed were snipers nearby.

We weren't called on for artillery fire on either the 6th or 7th. On the 7th some of us went through a few villages. The houses were in a mess. We went a little way into the hills, scouting around, looking for souvenirs.

On the 8th we broke bivouac at 1030 and drove north waterborne about eight miles. We made camp at a village called Yabu, and dug machine gun emplacements.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

We moved into a small secured village [Nakama], where we set up for artillery missions. We stood by all the next day and even went exploring for souvenirs. That night George L. Cash and Avery H. Terry encountered some activity on their watch, but came out of it okay.

On the 8th we took to the water and moved a distance along the coast to the village of Yabu, where we set up again and dug in. We then stood by for any missions in support of the 6th Marine Division's drive to overtake Motobu Peninsula.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

On 7 April we broke up the Battalion camp and headed north along the west coast of Okinawa, establishing a beach defense for the night. We got a chance to wash up a bit and strip down some of our weapons for a thorough cleanup. I say some of the weapons as we wouldn't have dared to have them all stripped down at the same time.

The next day, 8 April, we crossed Nago Bay and established a Battalion camp at a village called Yabu on the Motobu Peninsula. We were not too far from our elusive enemy in the northern section of Okinawa. My platoon was set up and registered as artillery. We noted that most of the civilian population was moving out of our way and leaving the area. Some returned later however to get rice and other food.

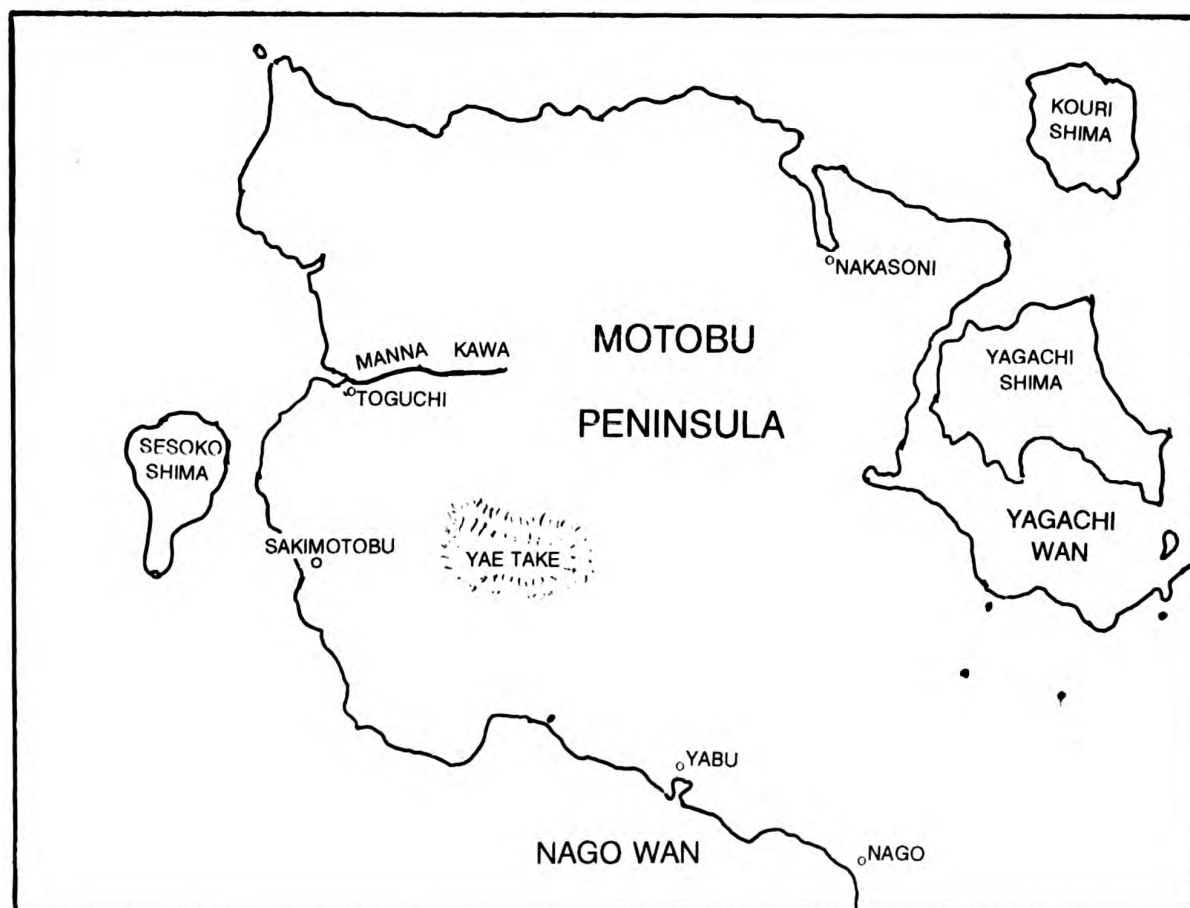
HARRY PAUL, Company D

At the Battalion camp on Green Beach Two we began to see kamikaze raids on the ships offshore. We saw some ships burning, but also a lot of Jap planes shot down. On April 6 and 7 most of the Battalion moved to northern Okinawa by LST, but

maintenance personnel remained till the next day. We broke camp at 2000, but it was 0300 before we got aboard LST 908 and moved north. We joined the rest of Company D in a Battalion camp at Yabu and dug in for the night. The 2d Platoon and others in the Battalion set up as artillery, and began firing right away. We prepared for an airborne attack at 0600 on April 9, but it was turned back.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

On 6 August we received orders to move to the Motobu Peninsula to support the 6th Division in its operations in northern Okinawa. The next two days we moved the entire battalion by road and LST up the Ishikawa Isthmus. The LSTs shuttled the amphibian vehicles up to Yabu, a small village just to the west of Nago, the largest settlement in the area. The road was a narrow native track that skirted the ocean, barely adequate for military vehicles. As I drove north I saw the body of a young Japanese/Okinawan woman lying at the water's edge. She was naked and her long black hair floated in the water. (I have noted that William Manchester, in his book, *Goodbye, Darkness*, reported the same scene.) I never knew whether she had been killed by Japanese or Americans or had died by her own hand.



YABU

The tiny, battered coastal village of Yabu became the base for operations of the First Armored Amphibian Battalion. The village was deserted by its civilian residents, except for a few Okinawan women disabled by age, disease, or injuries and left behind because they couldn't endure the rigors of moving. Some of the bolder natives came back into the village to pick up stores of rice or other essentials and then left. We began the work of establishing a *somewhat* permanent camp—artillery positions, perimeter defense, communications. Eventually, but not at first, there would be a galley, maintenance areas for amttanks and radios, and even a stockade.

Though ruggedly mountainous, the northernmost part of Okinawa—north of Motobu Peninsula—was lightly defended and by April 13 was brought under control by the 4th and 22d Marines. The enemy, however, under the command of a Colonel Takehiko Udo, had chosen to make its stand on Motobu Peninsula. The defensive stronghold would be on and around Yae Take, the 1200-foot mountain in the southwestern part of the peninsula. The First Armored was active throughout the Motobu campaign.

SOME NORTHERN OKINAWA GEOGRAPHY

Motobu Peninsula	Extremely mountainous peninsula in northern Okinawa, jutting to the northwest. About 10 miles long by almost 8 miles wide.
Nago Wan	Nago Bay, lying south of Motobu Peninsula and west of Ishikawa Isthmus.
Yabu	Small village on the southern coast of Motobu Peninsula, site of First Armored bivouac from April 8 to May 3, 1945.
Nago	Large town on Nago Wan, at the base of Motobu Peninsula. Headquarters for the 6th Marine Division in the northern operations.
Yae Take	Mount Yae, highest point on the Motobu Peninsula, center of a system of rugged ridges and escarpments extending in all directions. Main stronghold of Japanese forces in northern Okinawa.
Manna Kawa	The Manna River, flowing westward and emptying at Toguchi. Divides northern and southern hill masses on Motobu Peninsula.
Sesoko Shima	Island off the west coast of Motobu Peninsula.
Yagachi Shima	Island off the east coast of Motobu Peninsula.
Yagachi Wan	Yagachi Bay, waters between Yagachi Shima and the Motobu mainland.
Kouri Shima	Island off the northeast coast of Motobu Peninsula.
Ie Shima	Island off the northwest coast of Motobu Peninsula, target of a separate landing by the Army 77th Division.
Toguchi	Small town at the mouth of Manna Kawa.
Villages	Sakimotobu, Nakasoni. First Armored men mentioned villages, most of them on roads between Nago and Yagachi Wan, but usually did not name them. One village, Yabikubaru, was mentioned as being on the Motobu west coast, but could not be located on the map.

The missions of the First Armored at Yabu included artillery firing from battery positions in the camp, excursions out of camp to operate as mobile artillery, amphibious patrols in the reconnaissance of outlying islands, and deployment as assault guns on combat patrols. From the time of arrival on April 8 till the peninsula was secured on about April 23, several batteries of artillery were kept available for fire missions at all times. The First Armored worked closely with the 15th Marines, which was the artillery regiment of the 6th Marine Division. Complex radio and telephone nets were established, and maintained, linking am tanks, battery FDCs (fire direction centers), company FDCs, the Battalion FDC, Regimental FDCs, and Division headquarters. Forward observers (FOs) were usually provided by the artillery regiment, but sometimes air spotters or naval FOs were used.

From the beginning, small parties were sent from camp into the surrounding hills to scout for enemy presence in the area. For some of these there was a temptation to be more alert for souvenirs than for the Japanese. Also, a few men made unauthorized explorations for souvenirs and, in one instance, met with disaster. PFC Clarence E. Hettenhausen of Company B was with one such group. They were surprised by enemy soldiers, and Hettenhausen was not seen again.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

Once assembled in Yabu we had a fine area. The ground was covered with greenery, and a small stream bordering the area provided additional security. In the center was a large rock pile that served as a shelter for the Battalion headquarters. Security was put out, additional machine guns were mounted to cover our position, camouflage nets were hoisted over the vehicles, and we tied our firing batteries (LVTA platoons) into the Division artillery net. In the next valley to the west was an artillery battalion, and to the east, in Nago, the Division headquarters.

Our first Sunday ashore most of us attended church services in a rice mill converted into a place of worship. Screens had been rigged to make an altar, and it was banked by wild lilies. Our chaplain, a Catholic priest, led us in giving thanks for the light casualties we had sustained so far.

The infantry regiments were soon locked in combat with Japanese forces dug into strong positions on Mt. Yaetake, which dominated the Motobu Peninsula. Except for firing missions, however, our lives settled down to routine. We were even able to establish a makeshift mess hall and serve hot meals.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

I was actually astonished by the idyllic beauties of the northern countryside of Okinawa. The lovely rice paddies and the layered hillsides made it appear oriental-looking. The valley soil was black loam, while the uplands were gravel or red clay. Numerous natives came out of the hills. We were silent as we watched them, and so

were they. They seemed the most miserable people on earth, averaging no more than a bit over five feet in height, and undernourished beyond description.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

In the first few days at Yabu we improved the camp, brought in food supplies, set up three-strand barbed-wire fences around the machine gun emplacements, sent out scouting parties, and even did some souvenir hunting. We ate cold C, K, and 10-in-1 rations for a week until a galley was set up on April 15. Until then we never ate at regular times, just whenever we were hungry. We made "Joe" whenever we cared to. On machine gun watches every night we shivered because, after nearly a year in the tropics, we had to get used to the cold again. At first we could bathe in a stream, but they made a regulation against that. Fleas were so bad, crawling over us, we had to wear leggings at all times. We began to receive mail there. Civilians straggled in to their demolished village. Not understanding their language, we used sign language mostly. Goats, chickens, pigs, and horses were running around loose. At night we heard the loud reports of artillery, some close by, some in the distance.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

We did artillery firing while at Yabu, some platoon patrols, and quite a bit of harassing fire. After a while the only Japs left in the northern part of the island were on Motobu Peninsula, about 1¾ miles north of us in the mountains. There were supposedly about 1,000 of them there, with artillery, mortars, etc. We had a few incoming rounds from them, but they were always high. The Japs were surrounded and were being shelled and bombed. From our positions in Yabu we could see our shell bursts.

C. L. WHITLOCK, Company D

At the Battalion camp in the village of Yabu on the Motobu Peninsula we were close behind front lines. Another Marine and I were put on outpost watch with .30-caliber machine guns. The outpost was on a ridge top above the camp, and we had a sound power phone set up with camp. During the night we heard a lot of noises and chattering and movement coming up a trail. We thought the whole Jap army was coming in on us. When we knew that they were real close to us, we called camp and asked for flares so we could see them. They turned out to be 25 or 30 Okinawa natives trying to get back to the village. What a relief! We thought we were two dead Marines.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

Some B Company platoons set up as 75mm artillery, and from our radio jeep, as instructed, I contacted a forward observer in a light aircraft. The object was to have this FO help us zero in our indirect fire on a known target so that we might safely provide close supporting fire to U.S. units in the vicinity. I believe this was probably the first

instance of actual combat indirect artillery fire for First Armored, because I soon had not only the company commander, Captain Edgar S. Carlson, but the Battalion commander, Lt. Colonel Louis Metzger, and his staff swarming all over my jeep. The FO aircraft was low on fuel and voiced its need to terminate its work with us as promptly as possible. We needed one more round, and then another, and another, before my officers felt comfortable with the zero reading. The poor aviator, against his judgment, courageously remained aloft and called for corrections until we got that final round "on target." I've always hoped he returned safely to base. That night our 75mm's provided close support fire, with Captain Carlson personally checking the elevation of each howitzer before each salvo. We were informed that our fire was most accurate and effective.

ALBERT E. POWERS, Company D

One afternoon in Yabu we were alerted to man the guns. We fired a few rounds of artillery over a hill, and word came back shortly that we had stopped a counterattack.

THOMAS T. OYLER, Company C

At one point while we were at Yabu, Company C's 1st Platoon was sent out with an interpreter to see if any of the civilians might tell us where to find the Japanese troops. We were given a police dog and four infantrymen to help us in our night encampment defense. We didn't spend the night, though, because all we saw were a lot of elderly natives who could not or would not speak with our interpreter, who had been through a classical Japanese course at the University of Washington. We reported back to the 22d Marines' regimental headquarters at about midnight. They had an elderly native there who didn't respond either.

I spent some time at the 22d Marines' headquarters sending back requests for First Armored artillery fire. We were on a shelf just below the crest of a hill. One night the Japs dropped a shell in front of us, and then one behind us. We all thought we knew where the next one would be, and we all dived into a hole that had been dug for protection. After a nearby explosion we started to get out, and the regimental colonel said, "Next time, Lieutenant, don't dive so hard." I had landed on *him*.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

Soon after our arrival at Yabu, Japanese forces attacked the artillery battalion position just to the west of our location. In was a brisk engagement which forced the artillery personnel out of their position, but they quickly recaptured it. That action caused me to request that a rifle company be moved into our area as I did not know how strong the enemy force might be. The infantry was with us for one night; we fed them our hot meal and made do ourselves with field rations.

JAMES C. CHANDLER, Company B

Operating out of Yabu, we were for several days close to the front lines in the nearby hills. Civilians would walk through our lines, and this went on a couple of days

before we stopped it and detained them. I remember one little lady who did not want to stop. I pointed a .45 at her face, and she ignored me. Then I pulled my knife and made a motion like cutting a throat, and she got scared and went where she was told.

One day ten of us volunteered to go on a patrol to check out a valley. Our maps were very poor. We were only supposed to go in 600 yards, but Corporal Albert A. Sellers took us in about 2200 yards. We were split into three groups moving through a small village when Japs started firing at us with machine guns. We got back together and leapfrogged back to our outfit. We could see the Japs moving in the bushes up on the hill. We got back, and no one got a scratch. It seemed that the Good Lord stayed with us always.

WILLIAM F. COWGILL, Company B

In northern Okinawa George L. Cash and I were with a few other idiots who were on a patrol that turned into a souvenir hunt. While going through a village, a few of the men riding bikes they had found, the enemy appeared. We were somewhat slow to react, so they fired first, and we hit the deck. We emptied our carbines, but I am not sure we hit any of them. As they ran for cover, Willard V. Dietz, a B-5 gunner, was in the very area they were headed for. We thought he was a goner. Minutes later Dietz came crawling up a hill, okay but a bit pale, as we all were. We made a quick exit and, on our return, reported the event, dressed up a bit. We had seen approximately a dozen Japanese and, isolated as we were, that was a dozen too many.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

The next day after our arrival at Yabu, some of us left our tanks in camp and were sent on a patrol up in the hills. In a short while, we started to receive small arms fire. Feeling somewhat safe in that area, I had decided to take only my .45 pistol and, fool of fools, had it wrapped because I had just cleaned it. Everyone else was armed with a carbine or a submachine gun. I had a helpless feeling, especially since, although I had shot expert with the M-1, I hadn't even qualified with the .45-caliber pistol. We got the hell out of there and no one was hurt.

On April 10 in the Yabu camp we had monsoon rains, constant, dreary, and miserably cold. We also had fleas. When they got inside the rim of your boot or under your belt, the skin turned raw. We finally found shelter inside a hut, where our clothes could be boiled. On the 11th we began to receive food supplies. Chow rations were so bad, we hardly ate. "Joe" (coffee) seemed to be our main source of energy. It was nice when we took a few small spuds and vegetables from gardens, but that was going against orders.

On April 12 some men went up into the hills without orders. They ran into trouble and got pinned down. Three men, Paul L. Harris, Leo C. Smith, and Franklin C. Rauch, escaped and came back for help. All except 'Shorty' (Clarence E.) Hettenhausen were rescued; there was no trace of him. On the following day, patrols

were sent out to try to find Shorty, but no luck. One man, Julian B. Pocius, was shot up pretty bad. Those who left without orders later received deck court-martials for this mess.

JAMES C. CHANDLER, Company B

In the party which went looking for Hettenhausen, we topped out on a ridge overlooking a wide valley, 400-600 yards wide. I was carrying a .30-caliber machine gun. We set up on the rim looking over the valley. Sergeant Julian B. Pocius, one of the three in our position, was shot, and we pulled back. We did not find any trace of Hettenhausen.

EARLY AMTANK PATROLS

For several days beginning with April 10, Marines of the 6th Marine Division were engaged in probing actions on Motobu Peninsula, trying to determine the strength and disposition of enemy defenses. The First Armored supported these actions, not only by artillery fire from its Yabu location and by foot patrols in the Yabu area, but also by dispatching amtanks to support 6th Marine Division combat patrols on the peninsula. Between April 10 and 18, five amtank platoons operated with units of the 29th Marines, ready to provide direct or indirect fire. These operations took them as far north as Yabikubaru on the western coast of the peninsula, and Nakasoni on the eastern coast. From April 13 to 18 one platoon aided in the defense of the regimental command post of the 29th Marines.

Two incidents demonstrate ill-considered use of amtanks. On April 10, one platoon reported to the 4th Marines, but on arrival found that there was no way to employ them in the situation there. By order of the regimental commander, they returned to Yabu. On April 14 a similar incident occurred when an amtank platoon was ordered to report to the 1st Battalion of the 22d Marines, but were told on arrival that the need for them no longer existed. Reporting on the Motobu operations, Lt. Colonel Metzger later pointed out that, due to the great wear on tracks and power train, amtanks should not be dispatched by road to distant points without first establishing a definite need for them. Infantry commanders sometimes found it hard to distinguish between the capabilities of amphibious tanks and those of land tanks.

ROBERT A. FISH, Company A

On Motobu Peninsula the Battalion split up with various companies being assigned to regimental combat teams for artillery support. I made several trips up and down the Motobu Peninsula, visiting as needed the companies set up in firing positions for artillery fire.

One day I was sitting on a cliff at the end of Motobu Peninsula, watching the Army invasion of Ie Shima, an offshore island. I didn't know for a long time that Ernie

Pyle was killed in that landing.

Another day, coming back to our main camp, the jeep driver and I were on a road, we weren't sure just where. Suddenly a Jap soldier jumped out of the bushes with his hands in the air. We were pretty leery of him. He surprised us by speaking English. After some talk, we learned that he had been a taxicab driver in Los Angeles for fifteen years. He had gone home to visit his folks when the war started and got drafted into the Jap army.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

On a half hour's notice one day, the 1st and 2d Platoons of B Company left the Yabu camp at 1100. We went south first, crossed the base of Motobu Peninsula, and then went north, a trip of about ten miles, two miles waterborne. We saw destroyed villages and towns on the way and quite a few civilians watching the tanks go by and waving to us. But the trip was just a wild goose chase. We were to help out some outfit meeting stiff resistance, but they made out okay without us.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

At about 0800 hours on April 11, our 2d Platoon started out from the Battalion camp at Yabu on a patrol operation. Our objective was seaborne reconnaissance along the shoreline of the Motobu Peninsula, toward the village of Manna, where the front lines of the 29th Marines were. The sea was very rough, and everyone got soaked and bitter cold, and I got damned seasick. About seven miles up we pulled onto the beach and rolled into what had once been a fair-sized town for these parts. The 29th Marines had moved up just a few hours before, and we were to set up in the center of town to give them supporting artillery fire. We laid the battery and then strung up our camouflage netting over our five tanks. This done, we had just started to relax when incoming artillery rounds fell all around us. The Japs had us pinpointed already! We started our engines and pulled around a steep hill a hundred yards away. Sergeant Otis A. Guthrie's tank drove right out from under his netting, dragging it along with him and getting it all chewed up in the tank tracks. I was embarrassed as the riflemen grinned at us. They had been so glad to see us pull up into their midst. We hung around for a while until a decision could be made as to the next move. Because the Jap guns couldn't be located, it turned out we waved bye-bye to the tired 29th as we reentered the water. We returned to the bivouac area at Yabu, arriving at about 1740 hours.

In about the second week of April, some of A Company was along the Motobu coast and discovered a big cave right at the water's edge. The area was covered with evergreen trees and had extremely rough and rocky terrain right down to and around the cave. We got out of the tanks to see what was in the cave. It contained some suicide boats, called *kaiten* by the Japs. They were about the size of a Chris Craft (about 18 feet long), wooden, sleek-looking, and loaded with explosives, or a torpedo, with an impact detonator. Thinking back on it now I wonder why we didn't back off and blast them with the 75s, or set fire to them. We didn't though.

Howard Van Kessel, Company D

On April 13 Captain Robert E. McDowell, Private Jim B. Thornberry, and I went out of Yabu on a Jap position survey north of Sakimotobu, opposite the offshore island, Sesoko Shima. On the way back we were confronted by enemy mortar fire and dove into the ditch and stayed there until it was safe to resume jeep travel again. A 105mm artillery unit in the same area suffered heavy casualties as a result of the mortar fire.

THE YAE TAKE OPERATION

By April 12 or 13, it became clear that the main Japanese defense in northern Okinawa would be concentrated about Yae Take. Colonel Udo had from 1500 to 2000 troops and an extensive arsenal of light weapons, 75mm and 150mm artillery, and 6-inch naval guns. From the high ground of Yae Take, enemy artillery could fire in almost any direction at Marine targets as far away as Nago, and on April 13 *did* inflict 32 casualties and destroyed two 155mm guns of the 15th Marines. The 29th Marines had effectively isolated the enemy in this mountain stronghold, but taking it would be difficult. The rugged terrain was broken by steep ridges, deep ravines, and numerous caves, and had been well prepared for defense with mines and strategic gun emplacements.

General Lemuel C. Shephard, commanding the 6th Marine Division, ordered two battalions of the 29th Marines to attack the Yae Take defenses from the east, and one battalion of the 29th and two battalions of the 4th Marines to attack from the west and southwest. Later a battalion of the 22d Marines would be brought up.

Artillery support for these assaults was provided by the 15th Marines and the First Armored Amphibian Battalion. The versatility of First Armored amtanks was shown in this operation. Near Toguchi 29th Marine troops were under heavy fire from enemy guns operating from caves high in the mountains. Against these cave positions neither naval shelling nor aerial bombing had proved effective. Because bridges were out on the roads, artillery of the 15th Marines could not be brought up.

On April 12, however, the 2d Platoon of Company D, First Armored, moved out of Yabu, came around by sea, and put in at Toguchi. There they were attached to the 3d Battalion, 29th Marines, to provide artillery support in the battle for Yae Take. Fire was directed sometimes by a 15th Marines forward observer, sometimes by a naval observer. On April 14, the 1st Platoon came up from Yabu to relieve the 3d Platoon, and on the 16th the 3d Platoon relieved the 2d Platoon. Enemy soldiers attempted to infiltrate the amtank bivouac area on the night of April 12/13, and mortar and artillery shells landed in the area on the 16th. The amtanks were credited with silencing enemy field pieces, supporting casualty rescue teams, and assisting in the withdrawal of a pinned-down combat patrol. Their effectiveness at firing was rated good to excellent. The area was secured by April 19, and the 3d Platoon amtanks returned to Yabu on April 20.

Other significant events were occurring while the battle for Yae Take was in

progress. On April 12, President Franklin D. Roosevelt died at Warm Springs, Georgia. On the 16th the 77th Army Division landed on Ie Shima, the small island just three and a half miles off the northwest coast of the Motobu Peninsula. In southern Okinawa, Army troops were encountering increasingly heavy resistance from a strongly entrenched enemy.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

The Battalion participated in a fierce battle to take Mt. Yaetake, the commanding terrain on Motobu Peninsula. The infantry regiments had swept around the flanks of this commanding ground and were planning to attack to the southwest, toward our position and the Division headquarters. This caused a fire support problem as the artillery, from their positions, was masked (unable to bring indirect fire in support of the infantry). Because the waters around Motobu Peninsula were thought to be mined, close-in Naval gun fire was not available. The bridges on the road leading to suitable positions for the artillery were destroyed. On 14 April a company of our armored amphibians was ordered to support the infantry by indirect fire. They moved by water to a location from which they could support the attacking infantry. It worked well and once again demonstrated the utility of this secondary mission for LVTAs. Once Motobu Peninsula was secured this company returned to the Battalion area. While the capture of Mt. Yaetake did not spell an end to the fighting in the area, it was the last major fighting on northern Okinawa.

DALE L. BARKER, Company D

On Thursday, April 12, the 2d Platoon of D Company was ordered up to Toguchi by sea, and left Yabu early. Captain (Theodore A.) Burge, and I set out in a jeep driven by Byron H. Porter from H&S Company. When a demolished bridge blocked our way, Captain Burge and I transferred to one of the amtanks and went to Toguchi by sea. When we arrived, the amtank crews set up as an artillery battery, ready to support the troops in the high ground around Yae Take. Mayer S. Goldberg and I laid the battery communications and also laid telephone lines to the adjacent 29th Marines and JASCO (Joint Assault Signal Company).

Operating with a Naval forward observer, our guns knocked out some Jap field pieces that day and supported some casualty rescue teams. There was some confusion between our gunners and the Navy observer because his procedures for directing fire were different from those of Marine Corps artillery. At 1700 we saw a Jap plane offshore get knocked down by Navy anti-aircraft fire. Almost at the same time another Jap plane (we said it was a Betty) flew low over our heads and then up the Manna Kawa valley.

It was cold that night. At about 0130 a Jap patrol entered our bivouac area and was fired on by Homer F. Stephens on Tank D-8. The Japs retired a short distance and fired knee mortar shells among the tanks. When Friday morning dawned, we found one

dead enemy soldier and an abandoned Nambu machine gun. Our TCS radio communications back to the Yabu camp failed because of the mountainous terrain between us and Yabu. Goldie (Goldberg) and I did telephone line repairs. That day we received considerable mortar fire from enemy positions in caves high up in the mountains, but firing into those positions, the 2d Platoon helped break up a Jap counterattack on some Marine infantry. Toward the end of the day, René M. Bolduc, ordnance sergeant for D Company, came up with more ammo. We also heard on the radio of President Roosevelt's death.

At about midnight a party of Japs entering our area were fired on by Raymond S. Zakarczany on D-8. They then fled, leaving their dead. Dawn revealed several dead civilians, including a young mother and baby. Our interpretation of this incident was that the Japs had used civilians as a shield for their intrusion into our camp.

Later that day, Saturday, April 14, D Company's 1st Platoon came up to relieve the 2d Platoon, which then returned to Yabu. Jack (John T.) Evans thus replaced Goldie to work with me on communications. A jeep had come up by then, and Jack and I concentrated, without much success, on trying to contact the Yabu camp on the jeep radio. On the 16th, trying to find a better location from which to reach Yabu by radio, he and I drove to a seaside cliff. From there we could look down and watch as the Army made its landing on Ie Shima, just a few miles out to sea. We could also see U.S. planes strafing Sesoko Shima. Our tanks had heavy artillery work those days.

On Monday, the 16th, the 3d Platoon arrived to relieve the 2d Platoon, and "Pappy" (George) Papalias took Jack Evans's place in the communication work. At about dusk that day heavy shells landed in our area. On one of the days after that I received mail brought up from Yabu. One afternoon, some of us gathered around the jeep radio to hear a description of Roosevelt's funeral while, at the same time, a Navy plane was strafing a nearby hillside. By Friday, the 20th, things were winding down, but Pappy, "Zip" Sheppard, and I were still repairing telephone lines. Officially we were released on the 20th, but we didn't return to Yabu till the next day. We started from Toguchi by tank but, because of rough seas, put in to shore and finished the trip by road.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

On April 10, D Company's 1st Platoon moved out to support the infantry near Mt. Yaetake, but their tanks bogged down because of rough terrain, and they returned to camp. On the 12th we drove our 2d Platoon tanks by sea to the area below Mt. Yaetake and set up as artillery. There we knocked out two Japanese field pieces that day, and supported our troops bringing out casualties. We fired all our ammo, but at 1900 more ammo arrived. We received heavy mortar and machine gun fire in our area. That night D-8 fired on a Jap patrol entering our area, killing one man and wounding several others. It was just one more wild night on this rock.

On the next day, April 13, we continued our close-in support of the infantry, and continued to get mortar fire. I bruised my knee making a dive for a hole during a

mortar attack. I thought I also had a slight touch of malaria. That night several natives were killed by our fire as they tried to enter our area. At about 1300 on April 14, the 1st Platoon of D Company came up to relieve the 2d Platoon, and we returned to the Battalion camp at Yabu.

MAYER S. GOLDBERG, Company D

When the Japs tried to enter our bivouac area, Homer F. Stephens on our tank, D-8, fired at them in the dark. Then they started throwing mortar shells in among the tanks—too many of them, too close. We stayed in our foxholes, and luckily nobody was hurt. In the morning we found one dead Jap in front of our tank. His Nambu was pointed right at the D-8 turret, but Steve had emptied a whole clip from his Tommy gun into him. Steve got to keep the Nambu as a souvenir.

The next night, when we heard all the noise, we fired on the figures coming into the area. The next morning we found dead women, a dead child, and a baby on its mother's back, alive but sleeping. We took it to the first aid station.

During the same day, April 14, a pretty woman came down into the area and was allowed to walk around. When she started back up the hill, however, in the direction of enemy lines, somebody yelled, "Stop that girl," and somebody else yelled, "Go after her, Goldie." I grabbed my carbine and started out, but a mortar platoon killed her before I got there. They called down the hill, "We got her." Later in the day we were relieved by the 1st Platoon and returned to Yabu.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

The 3d Platoon moved up to Toguchi by sea on Monday, April 16. When we got near our landing area, it was difficult to determine exactly where we were to stage our landing. We spotted an infantryman on shore signaling us with a set of semaphore flags. I borrowed Lieutenant Knox's field glasses and read the message, which was as follows: "COME IN HERE." I acknowledged, and we headed for the beach. Hooray! After years of using semaphore as a boy scout and weeks of semaphore practice at the Boat Basin, I finally got to use this mode of communication for a real message. We headed for the shore near Toguchi and registered our tanks as artillery in support of the infantry regiments. We were successful in our ability to fire on the enemy positions located in caves. In today's Marine Corps the job would have been done with helicopter gunships.

It was on this operation that late one afternoon our area was peppered with artillery shells. Fortunately for us we were in a sandy or soft dirt area and very few of the shells exploded. It was my understanding that the Japanese were low on detonators and depended on impact to explode the shells. One shell landed and exploded very close to George F. Roberts and his crew's area. We thought for a while that they were goners, but all turned out okay. I went out with Dale Barker to repair some damaged telephone lines, taking a couple of hours for the job.

RECONNOITERING OFFSHORE ISLANDS

While the Yae Take operation was underway, the camp at Yabu continued to settle down to a routine of artillery fire, foot patrols, functioning communications, hot meals, mail calls, and steady maintenance work on tanks, weapons, radios, and other equipment. Enemy planes, some of them kamikazes, flew over frequently, provoking heavy antiaircraft fire, and incurring a few injuries from shrapnel in the Battalion ranks. When President Roosevelt died, a garbled news report led many to believe prematurely that the war in Europe had ended and that a celebration was in order.

After Yae Take had been taken, the chief task left to the 6th Marine Division in northern Okinawa was mopping up actual or potential pockets of enemy resistance. The First Armored amtanks were well suited to amphibious combat reconnaissance of three offshore islands: Yagachi Shima and Kouri Shima on the eastern and northeastern coast of the Motobu Peninsula, and Sesoko Shima on the west coast.

On April 20, Company C sent amtanks by water to the vicinity of Sakimotobu for fire missions against Sesoko Shima. The speed of this "displacement" was considered worthy of mention in the battle reports. Orders came at 1300, the tanks left Yabu at 1400, they traveled 8500 yards by sea, and they were ready for registration by 1600. Company C followed up on April 22 with an actual landing on Sesoko Shima.

On April 21, Company B amtanks moved across the base of the Motobu Peninsula to the coast opposite the island of Yagachi Shima. They supported Marine infantry in securing that island. On the 22d Company B moved out, northward along the coast of Yagachi Wan, till they were opposite Kouri Shima. On the 23d they landed on that island.

The pattern of landing for all three of these islands was the same. From six to ten Marine infantrymen rode behind the turret of an amtank. Upon landing, the troops disembarked and moved ashore, the amtanks covering their advance inland as far as the terrain permitted. In the Sesoko Shima landing, the amtanks supported the infantry throughout the greater part of the island, traveling on roads. In all these landings, some of the amtanks remained waterborne offshore covering the advance of the infantry along the beaches. No enemy opposition was encountered on these patrols.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

While the other platoons of D Company were still at Toguchi, the 2d Platoon continued to do artillery work, firing into the hills. On April 17 (Robert C.) Otto and Fowler were injured by shrapnel. I was hurt too, but not bad.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

On April 13 we received the sad news at Yabu of Franklin D. Roosevelt's death. Someone, perhaps Lieutenant (Irwin Ronald) Buckner, broke out a bottle of brandy, and we had a toast to FDR, even if he *was* a Democrat.

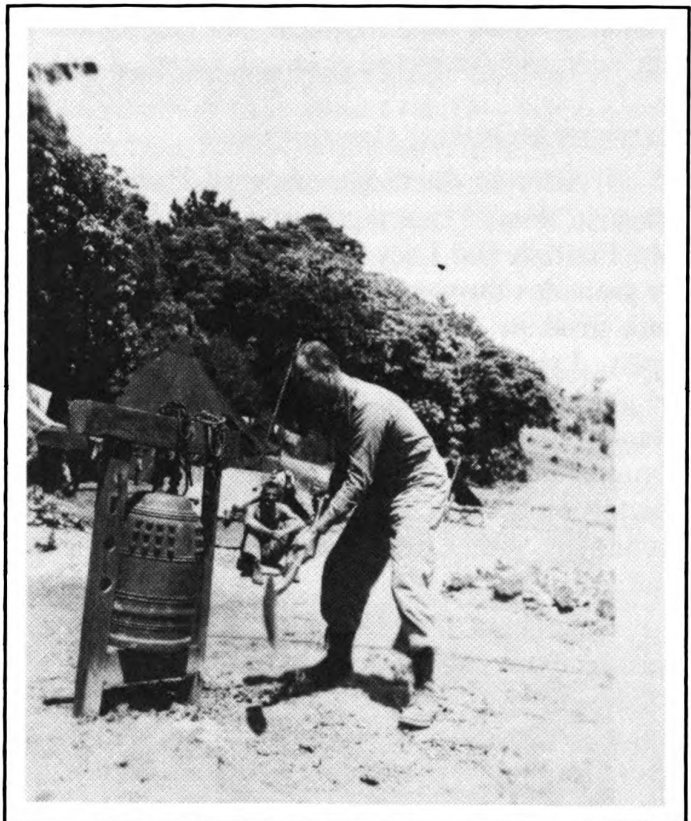
ROBERT A. FISH, Company A

One day in camp we received word the war was over, and everybody started celebrating. Somebody had alcohol from the Navy, and we proceeded to fill a lister bag with drink. Everybody was feeling pretty good, including Lieutenant Gerard Alexander, the communications officer, who rode a bike into a foxhole and was bruised up pretty bad. About this time the word was changed. Instead of the war ending, President Roosevelt had died. We went back to work.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

While on Motobu Peninsula we heard word the war in Europe had ended. With a shovel I banged a large Shinto bell we had liberated and ordered medicinal brandy be issued in celebration, one small bottle per two Marines. The information was in error. It was not until days later that the real armistice was announced.

There was a series of small islands off the Peninsula, and a company of the 1st Armored Amphibians, with the Division reconnaissance company, landed on several of them to ensure there were no Japanese forces there. I made the landing on Yagachi Shima and, being a good Marine, looked through the area for souvenirs. No souvenirs or Japanese forces were found. When I returned to Motobu Peninsula I was asked how I liked the leper colony. I spent a lot of time washing my hands for the next few days. A second landing, on Sesoko Shima, also failed to reveal any Japanese forces, but the beach and nearby caves contained Japanese attack boats.



Lt. Col. Metzger striking a Shinto bell in celebration of the supposed end of the war in Europe. (Paul)

EARL M. HILL, Company B

In northern Okinawa, I was with a column of B Company amtanks traveling on a narrow road passing through a small native village in the vicinity of Nago. I say "narrow" because the 11-foot width of our tanks exceeded the width of the street, and

we unavoidably demolished the front walls of the flimsy buildings on one side as we rumbled through town. This seemed to be of negligible consequence as the village appeared deserted. Okinawa was the first place where we had seen large numbers of civilian refugees fleeing from battle zones. These seemed to be mostly women and children, all carrying their pathetic worldly goods, bound for God knows what destination. The Marines offered K rations and candy to these miserable outcasts.

Off the east coast of Motobu Peninsula were a couple of tiny islands, one of which [Yagachi Shima] became the object of an operation by a column of B Company am tanks. We were to attack and secure this small spit of land. We entered the water from the main island and, as we approached the small island, poured 75mm and .50-caliber fire ahead of us. When we reached shore, we encountered a group of unarmed civilians waving white rags, among whom was an English speaker who informed us that we were wreaking havoc on a harmless and defenseless leper hospital. We passed this word to our company command post and received instructions to withdraw.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

After an operation on April 21, we set up a bivouac for one night [not far from Yagachi Wan]. That night we got little sleep because of Nips in the area. Lou (Luther M.) Flattum and Lacy (Paul L.) Harris, on watch from 0430 to 0600, were just missed by grenades thrown by Japs. They threw grenades back at the Japs and fired at them with machine guns and submachine guns, but no luck. There was plenty of firing all night. I shared a foxhole with my pal, Harold E. "Bus" Jones. We had been awakened by all the commotion, when suddenly something made a dull thud on the poncho and blanket on the bottom of our foxhole. Our first thought was, "*Grenade!*" We sprang up simultaneously, evacuated that foxhole like greased lightning, and hit the deck, waiting for the explosion. None came. It was only a clod of dirt. We returned to the foxhole rather sheepishly, and everyone got a good laugh out of it. Eleven Japs were killed in and about our area that night.

At about 1430 the next day, April 22, we moved up the island about eight miles, driving about half and half by land and water. There were many inlets and small rocky islands along the shore of Okinawa, with high mountains rising out of coral-colored water. Destroyed Jap barges and small ships were lying along the shore. We bivouacked about four miles from Kouri Shima, a small island we were to capture the next day. We stood watches that night from the tank turret and were glad there was little firing.

Up at 0530 the morning of April 23, our two platoons left the bivouac at 0615 bound for Kouri. Each tank had on board about eight Marine infantrymen. After a short ride of approximately four miles, we went into a line formation about 1000 yards from the beach, opening fire at 500 yards. Because I had trouble with the tank, I couldn't stay in formation very well, and came in about four or five minutes behind the rest. There was no resistance. Lucky again! We took a few civilian prisoners for intelligence. Our colonel brought in one prisoner. We spent three to four hours on the

island, then returned to our bivouac of the previous night. After some chow, we left at about 1300 and returned to the Battalion camp at Yabu. There we returned to the usual routine of digging in and keeping machine gun watch.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

On April 21 our platoon was called on a mission. We bivouacked that night, and our squad, we thought, drew the worst position for the night. Paul L. Harris and I drew the last watch and had some activity. The Japs just in front of us were evidently trying to get out of there. They tried to appear Americans out for a walk and made the mistake of uttering some words in poor English. Someone on our left opened up, and so did we. Our machine gun jammed, then silence. Nothing else happened before first light, but with threats lurking in the dark, the wait was excruciating. Eleven dead Japs were counted.

That morning, on the 22d, we got a chance to shower and change clothes. We felt like new. At about 1430 we moved up about eight or nine miles to a tiny village, where we camped. We were about four miles from little Kouri Shima, an island we were to capture the next day. Next morning, with eight infantrymen per tank, the 1st and 2d Platoons moved out. We met no resistance on the island, took a few civilians for intelligence, and returned to the original area.

EDWARD G. RIZKALLA, Company C

On one of our missions I saw an old woman sitting against an embankment. She looked so thin and frail that I went over and offered her the chocolate bar from my K ration. She smiled at me, took it, and started eating it. As I watched her, I glanced down at her leg. On the side, from the knee to her ankle, about midway, there was a hole about three inches long, and the skin was all rotted. I could see about an inch of the bare bone exposed. That was the first time I had seen a leper.

While we were moving in our amtanks in a desolate area in the northern part of Okinawa, I looked to my left and saw a man beckoning me to come to him. I jumped off the tank and went over to where he was leaning against a bunker. He said the DUKWs had come and taken away the wounded, but had had no more room for him. He said they weren't coming back and, if he didn't get to an aid station right away, he was going to bleed to death. I got permission from Lieutenant Harold D. Holder to get him to an aid station. We put him on a stretcher and carried him a short distance on the tank. But the rest of the way, another man (I can't remember who) and I carried him on the stretcher for the longest time. I was so weak with malaria then that I could hardly make it, but we did finally get there. A corpsman took his bandages off and found three holes in his stomach, possibly shrapnel wounds. We left him there and went back to the tank. What bothers me to this day is that while I carried him I didn't get his name. I didn't know if he was Army or Marine, what city and state he was from, and whether he lived or died.

LAST DAYS AT YABU

Clearing the offshore islands was only a part of, and only the beginning of, a process of mopping up throughout northern Okinawa. After the loss of Yae Take by the Japanese, organized resistance in the zone of the 6th Marine Division was ended. Survivors of Colonel Udo's force, however, spread out over the mountainous region and began to engage in uncoordinated but widespread guerrilla activity. Harassing assaults by these groups engaged the efforts first of the 6th Marine Division, then of the 27th Army Division, and eventually other troops, till the end of the war.

For the First Armored at Yabu, this condition required sustained vigilance even though the period from April 23 till May 3 was relatively quiet. Camp security could not be relaxed against the threat of intrusion by guerrillas. Enemy planes aloft and antiaircraft fire from ships and shore batteries were reminders that the Okinawa campaign was still going on. In the Battalion it was a time for catching up on the maintenance and repair of amtanks, weapons, radios, and other equipment. Camp life was not exactly normal, but there were some amenities, such as hot meals. We not only had a galley, but also a Battalion switchboard, baths, and religious services. For some time a Franciscan priest served with the Battalion. Men took what pleasures they could find in their surroundings, observing the country and the civilians, even riding horses and bicycles they had found. The CPs of D Company had brought along a portable recreation radio they had rigged back on Guadalcanal. On this they could hear, not AFRS, but Radio Manila ("This is General MacArthur's radio station in Manila") and various Japanese propagandists, including Tokyo Rose. Some of the men were beset by malaria, a few severely. The epidemic of souvenir hunting, once rampant, abated substantially after the Hettenhausen disaster and consequent disciplinary action.

The Battalion had performed well on Motobu and had been commended by division and regimental commanders. In more than a dozen amphibious missions the versatility of amtanks, moving both by water and land, had been demonstrated in their support of infantry troops and the delivery of direct fire. They had proved themselves to be highly mobile artillery, capable of fast response to missions and of operating from sites which other artillery units could not reach. Besides Hettenhausen, who was listed as missing in action, nine men of the Battalion were wounded in northern Okinawa operations.

In southern Okinawa the divisions of the Army's XXIV Corps had not only *found* the enemy, but were engaged in brutal combat along a seemingly impregnable defense line. By the end of April, the Army's 96th and 27th Divisions had suffered such heavy casualties that General Buckner, the U.S. commander, relieved them by moving in the 77th Division and the 1st Marine Division respectively. The mauled 27th Division was moved to northern Okinawa to replace the 1st and 6th Marine Divisions in mop-up operations from the Ishikawa Isthmus northward. The First Armored continued at Yabu till May 3 before moving south to join the battle there.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

On April 21 Mt. Yaetake was secure, and all D Company tanks returned to camp. I had been working on D-9's electrical system and D-8's brakes. On the 22d, as we were beginning to relax after a grinding three weeks, we were hit at sunset by a large air attack. On April 23d we began getting an old school house prepared for living quarters and a maintenance shop, and on the 26th all maintenance personnel moved to this repair area. Also on the 26th, at a general assembly, Roger I. Brooks, Earl P. Hanley, Arthur J. Childress, and Harold L. Roberts were given three days bread and water for disobedience of orders, and Herman A. Vernon was given a summary court martial. Toward the end of April, I came down for about three days with malaria. On Monday, April 30, we were put on five-minutes' notice to move out to the south, but we remained at Yabu until May 4. In that time we checked all the tanks, welded pontoons on D-1, D-9, and D-17, and replaced the transmission in D-9.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

After we returned from Kouri Shima, we stayed at the Yabu camp ten more days, still doing the usual tank maintenance and repair, improving the camp, washing clothes, writing and receiving letters, going on patrols, and standing machine gun watches. For at least three nights we had condition red. After a month on Okinawa, I was still sleeping in my clothes except for shoes and leggings, and sometimes with those. It rained a lot. Once I did some horseback riding on one of the strays coming through our camp. When we got some bikes from an outfit next to us, I also got in some bike riding. On May 1, I packed and mailed some souvenirs home. On April 28 we had company assembly at which four men were reduced one rank for leaving camp without proper authority: Paul Lacy Harris, Franklin C. Rauch, George W. Tremblay, and Guido S. Pironti. On May 1 the Colonel held a general assembly to compliment us on the job we had done in northern Okinawa and tell us we were moving soon to the southern end of the island. On May 2 the galley was taken down, and all of us were getting ready to move south.

GEORGE F. ROBERTS, Company D

Washing Machine Charlie [a Japanese aircraft] would come over sometimes at night, and occasionally some nearby AA batteries would shoot. Usually everyone would douse all lights and just be quiet.

I enjoyed seeing the pine trees there, having lived in the mountains and been a forest ranger in civilian life. We would go on short patrols up there. Once we were bringing in some native prisoners, including a young woman, who looked pretty good to me by then. The young woman made a grab for Carl (Carlton S.) Renhard's Kabar (sheath knife), but one of us stopped her. Some of them were pretty well brain-washed, I guess.

JAMES C. CHANDLER, Company B

It was about this time that I was made tank commander for B-3. I was already a corporal, the best rank in the Marine Corps—no guard duty, no mess duty, and no work parties. I don't know why, but it seemed as if B-3 always got the pivot position, meaning we had to dig two machine gun positions.

EDWARD G. RIZKALLA, Company C

Once I was on guard duty at night at about 0200 or 0300. It was real dark, and I heard some noise in the brush in front of me. I asked for the password, but got no response. Three times I asked, but still no response. Then I fired my carbine into the brush, emptying the magazine of shells. When morning came, I found this huge, black domestic pig in the brush. Boy! Roast pork! We got a fellow who had been a butcher in civilian life, hung it up, skinned it, and cut it into four huge pieces for a barbecue. But when the Colonel got word of it, he said to bury it. What a heartbreak!

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

A Battalion galley was set in the Yabu camp, and we had hot chow for a change. I believe it was in this area that one evening there was a rustling noise, and one of the men challenged the intruder. The noise still kept coming. There was some machine gun fire. The next morning we found a dead cow in the area. The dead cow did not go to waste. The medical officer examined the meat and found it to be okay. We had fresh meat for a change. Not only that, but the word must have gotten around, as there were quite a few new faces in the Battalion area for dinner.

DONALD C. HOUSTON, Company B

It was while we were camped at the village of Yabu that Bill (Willard V.) Dietz acquired a K-9 dog, Watch. He eventually took the dog back to the States with him.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

While we were at Yabu, Private Eddie Dement, our A-10 driver, got a nice-looking Jap saddle horse, but without a saddle. Jap officers had horses, and our infantrymen used them to haul heavy gear, mortars, and such while moving up the roads. Eddie was riding that horse all over the area. At that time we had dug a big foxhole, probably for four of us. It had a tin roof, some sides, and about a foot of rice straw in the bottom of it. The shack was to help keep out the rain and chill at night. It wasn't long before all of us were being eaten alive by fleas. Everyone in the area was infested, not just we shack dwellers. We cursed Eddie and told him to get rid of that damned horse. Every man was given a can of flea powder containing DDT, probably a big dose of it. It may be outlawed now, but it sure got rid of fleas when we diligently powdered our armpits, crotches, chests, and clothes.

As always, from dusk to dawn, each squad had at least two men on watch in a foxhole. We split the night up, probably into three-hour watches for each pair of men. One night the officer we called "Crazy Joe" had had a few belts of whatever he drank and came crawling suddenly into one of the foxhole huts. He snarled, "Wake up, you #*!@!. What if I were a Jape?" (He always called Japs "Japes" for a reason only he knew.) One of the men inside, looking over his leveled and cocked .45 replied, "I'd blow your God-damned head off, *Sir!*"

The word on "fraternizing" came from Colonel Louis Metzger himself in one of his formal-informal formations. There had been some rapes occurring, it seems, by some troops on the peninsula. The Colonel was very explicit that none of us had better participate in such behavior. I had heard of none of that happening, and actually we hadn't seen too many civilians at that time. I had seen enough, though, to know that there were some very attractive ladies on the island.

At about 0730 hours one morning A-10's crew had a fire going to heat water in our canteen cups for coffee. This was made from individual packets that came in each man's K ration. Just by adding hot water you had a drink you might believe was coffee. It was a chilly morning, enough so that we all had field jackets on. An Okinawan woman in a heavy kimono came up to the fire. We had a communication problem right off, but what really added to our anxiety was one leg that looked like the mumu. It was swollen up like the trunk of a tree. She seemed to walk okay, but we didn't like that leg. The poor thing was probably half-starved or wanted a hot drink. But because we were afraid of that leg, we tried to shoo her away. Finally Lieutenant Charles "Speed" Spilman put a bayonet on a rifle and prodded her, all the time gesturing to get the hell out of there. She finally left. I don't remember, but we probably didn't give her any rations.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

A strange event occurred the night before one of our landing operations. A Marine, in company with an old Okinawa woman, appeared in the light of our camp fire. He was a straggler from the 22d Marines and was obviously confused and disoriented. The Marine was carrying a cake tin which, when opened, contained flesh. (We wondered if it was human flesh.) He was turned over to the Military Police.

The Okinawan people in the area were farmers and very poor. When the Marines approached the area they released their insane from the local asylum, causing a security problem. Although I heard no reports of violent behavior, the insane people would shout and cause noise near our positions, thus causing concern by the Marines on watch. By both loudspeaker and leaflets the Okinawan people were encouraged by American authorities to come into our lines, but *ONLY BY DAYLIGHT*. On too many nights our security would hear something in front of their position, open fire, and the next morning find women and children lying there.

The 22d Marines made a major capture: a complete geisha house or, if not geishas, "comfort girls," whom the Japanese army always enjoyed. The regiment handled it very well, with the first sergeants issuing "liberty passes" to deserving Marines. This worked until a chaplain discovered what was going on.

CHAPTER
FIFTEEN

Okinawa: Southern Operations

When the First Armored Amphibian Battalion moved south, it was to join the relentless struggle that was to make the Okinawa campaign the bloodiest of the Pacific War. Though the Army's XXIV Corp had taken Machinato and Yonabaru airfields, and made other gains by the end of April, it had suffered heavy casualties. General Buckner, commander of the Tenth Army, was forced to reorganize his troops. He sent the battered 27th Army Division to lighter duty in northern Okinawa, and ordered the III Amphibious Corps into the array of forces laying siege to the enemy's main defense line in the south. That line centered on Shuri and extended to Yonabaru in the east and Naha in the west. Four divisions constituted the new lineup of assaulting U.S. forces: from left to right (east to west), the 96th Army Division, the 77th Army Division, the 1st Marine Division, and the 6th Marine Division. In the sector of the 6th Marine Division, to which the First Armored was attached, the front ran principally along the north bank of the Asa Kawa (Asa River), facing the Japanese on the south bank.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

By the end of April information came of the heavy combat in central Okinawa. The Japanese defenders had carefully conserved their forces and had constructed a series of major defense lines, the main position between Naha, Shuri, and Yonabaru. A network of tunnels had been constructed in a series of hills behind the Asa Kawa, with exits on both the forward and reverse slopes. The defenders would fight from the forward openings, then withdraw into shelter when the American forces closed in, only to counterattack from the reverse slope exits to regain the hill. It was a bloody and stubborn defense.

U.S. forces were taking heavy casualties and additional combat power was needed. First, the Marine III Corps artillery was sent south. Then the 1st Marine Division was sent to relieve the 27th Army Division (the same division which had done so poorly on

Saipan). The 27th was moved north to relieve our 6th Marine Division in what was by then almost a secure area. On 2 May the Division commenced moving south. Few niceties were exchanged between the Marines and the ragged members of the 27th Army Division.

FROM YABU TO BROWN BEACH

On May 3 and 4, 1945, the First Armored secured the Yabu camp and prepared for departure. On the 4th, men, tanks, and equipment were loaded onto five LSTs and transported south, through Nago Wan, to an area between Sunabe and Chatan on Okinawa's west coast. This area was just south of the Brown Beaches, where the Army's 96th Division had landed on L-Day. From the LST decks, a little could be seen of Japanese air attacks on shipping, for *Kikisui-5* was underway, timed to coincide with a major Japanese counteroffensive inland on Okinawa. Debarkation from the LSTs was a considerable distance from shore and apparently started late on May 4 and ended in the morning of May 5. All vehicles moved ashore and up to high ground, to establish a Battalion bivouac. There the men dug in and set up defenses and communications.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, *Company B*

Early on May 4 we broke camp at Yabu. We policed up the area and filled in the foxholes and machine gun emplacements, then drove out, and boarded LST 960. Offshore from Okinawa we could see Ie Shima, the island on which Ernie Pyle, the famous combat correspondent, was killed. Proceeding south about 40 miles along the Okinawa coast, we saw Naval hospital ships, the *USS Mercy* and the *USS Solace*. Many other ships of all kinds were lying at anchor. Staying aboard that night, Lou (Luther M.) Flattum and I found cots in the crew's quarters. We saw the ships use fog smoke as a screen from kamikaze raiders.

We left the LST at 0730 on May 5 and, waterborne about three miles, went ashore to a new bivouac area, inland about half a mile, at the top of a gradually sloping hill. This was above Brown Beach, at III Amphibious Corps headquarters. We dug in and camouflaged the tanks.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, *Company B*

As our LSTs moved south from Yabu, the East China Sea was placid, the sun was warm, and we were pretty tired. The guys soon started sprawling themselves all over the boxes and cylinders of ammunition. One fellow broke out a K ration and started eating it. Soon everyone else followed suit. We sailed south along the coast approximately 30 miles and couldn't help but notice the great fleet of warships sitting in the harbor. We spent the night on board ship. There was an air raid, but we couldn't see much because of a blanket of smoke screen. At 0730 on May 5, we disembarked and proceeded inland a short distance to somewhere south of the L-Day landing right flank.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

Eddie Dement, the driver on A-10, had hidden a wooden cask of raisin jack inside one of the tank's pontoons. That's where it was as we moved south by LST from Yabu to a new bivouac area. It was fermenting ferociously and, as we came ashore, Lieutenant Charles F. "Speed" Spilman, up in the turret, had no trouble sniffing the fumes. He laughed and said that, when we pulled the bung, he damned well expected to get some of it. It was that type of thing that made Lieutenant Spilman pretty special to the 2d Platoon.

THE BROWN BEACH OPERATIONS

Even though there was a galley, to serve hot meals, the Battalion camp at Brown Beach is not remembered favorably by those who were there. Enemy artillery on the Shuri heights, enemy air raids, and the Navy's antiaircraft fire all made it prudent to dig deep foxholes. Some men were struck by flak, and some perhaps by snipers. Rains began just a day or two after the arrival of the First Armored. We lived in mud and very wet foxholes. On May 8, the news of victory in Europe spread through the ranks.

At first there was little action for the Battalion. It was a time when the Tenth Army was engaged in realigning its forces, moving all four of its divisions into position on a line of departure, ready for a major assault on the Japanese defenses. The 6th Marine Division was moving into position for crossing to the heavily defended south bank of the Asa Kawa. The assault, all along the line, was set for May 11.

As a part of these movements, the armored amphibian forces in the area were reorganized. On May 9, the 3d Armored Amphibian Battalion (less four platoons), previously attached to the 1st Marine Division, were joined to the First Armored, thus forming the Armored Amphibian Group, under command of Lt. Colonel Metzger. Except for two sectors assigned to other units, this combined group, comprising variously 93 to 105 amtanks, was charged with defending 11,000 to 13,500 yards of western Okinawa beaches from Chatan to Asa Kawa. This arrangement continued until May 26. Leaving a few vehicles as a Battalion rear echelon, most First Armored amtanks moved out of the Brown Beach bivouac area on May 9 and were deployed along the coast for beach defense.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

On 7 May heavy rains commenced which lasted for several days. The unpaved native roads, churned by heavy military vehicles, became masses of waist-deep mud. The countryside was filled with rivulets and also became mud. All of this was taking place under direct enemy observation from the commanding ground of the Japanese main battle positions. The 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion took up positions to defend the beaches in the Division area against expected Japanese counterlandings from the south. The 3d Armored Amphibian Battalion was to our north. Both amphibian battalions

were under my operational control but, given the extent of the beach area we were defending, it was difficult to exercise. One Japanese counterlanding was attempted, but the attackers were cut down on the reefs by the 3d Armored Amphibian crews.

At this time the Japanese began to take advantage of President Roosevelt's death by firing propaganda leaflets into our lines telling us the President had died because he was so distressed over the fleet losses off Okinawa. As we knew how the battle was going, we had a good laugh at this unsophisticated attempt at propaganda.

My luck held. One day, as I was turning off the "main road" to reach the Battalion command post, my jeep was cut off by an Army 2½-ton truck. I was annoyed, but he was larger. No sooner had he started down the trace toward the beach than he hit a mine. The truck disintegrated, and I saw two bodies fly into the air.

Large sections of the beach were backed by seawalls. In order to gain protection from incoming enemy rocket and artillery fire our vehicles, whenever possible, were positioned tightly against the walls, facing the sea. When Japanese troops fired at our vehicles and their crews with rifles and machine guns, our returned fire, with 75mm howitzers and machine guns, had a salutary effect.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

Most of our A-10 tank crew was sleeping in a big bomb crater. It had been raining for three or four days, and we were always wet. We had draped a large tarp on some poles over the hole and tried to sleep in there. There was a hell of an odor of decomposing flesh, but we hadn't found any body parts. There were a couple of rats in the hole, and one night we could hear them chewing on something. Every so often they'd run over us as we tried to sleep. We were afraid they would try eating live bodies, namely ours, as well as dead ones. After a few hours of that, Hank Pelzar had had enough, and fired off a couple of rounds at them from his pistol. After that, we were more frightened of Hank than of the rats.

One day each of our 2d Platoon crews got a big chunk of raw beef. It may have been on May 8, the day we heard the war in Europe had ended. I'm not sure why we got the meat, but maybe a ship's freezer conked out and, instead of throwing the contents over the side of the ship, they gave it to us. In any case, we had about eight pounds of beef, on a stick, and cooked it over a fire. We were parked over a seawall at the time.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

Dug in at the Brown Beach camp, "Bus" (Harold E.) Jones, Lou (Luther M.) Flat-tum, and I slept in a sort of doghouse fashioned from panels we took from a house in a village. It was a noisy place, especially at night, with frequent air raids, with artillery, naval guns, and machine guns firing all night, and with flares dropped continually. We stayed there for six days altogether, doing nothing much except servicing the tanks and standing watches. On May 8 we heard the swell news that the war in Europe was over.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

The scenery above Brown Beach was a different world compared to the northern end of Okinawa. There was nothing beautiful about that place. The night was filled with the sounds of field artillery and big naval guns roaring thunder. Machine guns and small arms were going at it too, and not too far away.

For several days we just did beach defense, worked as artillery, and even unloaded ammunition. On May 8 it rained and, with the rain, came the news of the collapse of Nazi Germany and the declaration of V-E Day. Our response was not that great. Cold and rain-soaked, our concern was only with our own very small but vital part of the war.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

At our new Battalion camp, we dug in for the night, and all the next day kept on digging. It rained cats and dogs in the following days while I worked on D-9 and Lowell G. Seifert on D-11. On May 7 Fred Conner was wounded by a sniper's bullet which just missed his spine. He was evacuated to a hospital ship the next day. By the 8th our foxhole was flooded, we worked in deep mud, and were soaking wet and muddy all day. It was really hell.

On Wednesday, May 9, the 2d Platoon moved down to the seawall for beach defense. We heard two landing barges were destroyed that night, but no Japs reached shore. The next day the 1st and 3d Platoons of D Company joined in the beach defense. Kamikaze attacks were still going on, and artillery shells landed near us. The Navy sank six Jap-loaded barges that night. On Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, not much was doing. Sunday, May 13, was Mother's Day, but it didn't seem like it around there.

DALE L. BARKER, Company D

On May 9, Captain Ted (Theodore A.) Burge and the 2d Platoon moved down to the beach below camp, where we set up for beach defense. The 1st and 3d Platoons joined us the next day. Tank D-16 and a rear echelon were left at the Battalion headquarters. We laid long telephone lines between tank beach defense positions along the seawall. We had difficulty, however, maintaining them. We laid the lines just inside the seawall, but several times Marine infantry would bivouac in the area and build fires for coffee right over our phone lines. I then tried laying the lines below the seawall on the seaward side. That worked okay till the tide came in. Then I learned that the insulation on the lines would not hold up to salt water. We continued in that location for four or five days.

When we left that position to move south, our amtanks moved along just at the seaward edge of the reef. Another man and I were assigned to keep a watch forward for mines, he on the port side, I on the starboard. We encountered no mines, but I was fascinated by the beauties of the live coral in the water below us. I had never before had an opportunity to observe close at hand the beautiful colors and shapes of coral formations. It was a memorable contrast to the grim sights ashore.

THE BATTLE FOR NAHA

From May 10 to the end of the month, the First Armored was heavily engaged in the Battle for Naha, the capital city. In addition to event-filled beach defense and intensive artillery work, the Battalion always had platoons and companies of amtanks away on amphibious missions. They seemed to be in constant motion as they moved up and down the coast to deliver direct or indirect fire in support of 6th Marine Division infantry. All of this activity proceeded under enemy surveillance and gunfire from the heights of the Naha-Shuri-Yonabaru defense line. Beach defense was punctuated by kamikaze raids on the ships and by infiltrators coming in off the reef. The sights and sounds of night were horrendous. The strange light of flares and tracers lit up a ravaged landscape; ack-ack and artillery rumbled, roared, and whistled ominously overhead.

THE ASA KAWA ESTUARY

General Buckner ordered a simultaneous attack on May 11 by all four Tenth Army divisions in a major offensive against the Naha-Shuri-Yonabaru line. The 6th Marine Division, however, had already begun its attack on May 9 in an effort to cross the Asa Kawa (Asa River). By nightfall on the 10th, the 22d Marines (of the 6th Division) were struggling to hold a bridgehead south of the river. In the night of May 10/11 and through the morning of the 11th, under constant enemy fire, the 6th Engineer Battalion built a Bailey Bridge across the river, enabling land tanks to cross over and support the 22d Marines. By 1900 that day the division controlled a mile-wide beachhead south of the Asa Kawa and along the coast toward Naha.

The First Armored sent Company B amtanks south to take part in the river crossing action. From the reef south of the Asa Kawa, the armored amphibians joined naval guns and planes in trying to silence enemy artillery harassing the engineers who were working under fire to complete the Bailey bridge. Subsequently, as the 22d Marines advanced southward, the amtanks also extended their beach defense coverage.

LOUIS METZGER, *Battalion Commander*

As the battle moved south we supported it by both direct and indirect fire. The intense fighting had required the artillery to expend huge quantities of 105mm ammunition, which soon was in limited supply. Fortunately there was an ample supply of 75mm ammunition for us and, as a result, our battalion was called upon to provide more and more artillery support missions.

Yard by yard the American lines advanced, but at a terrible cost in casualties. The Asa Kawa was crossed and Naha, the capital city of Okinawa, lay ahead. Offshore the Navy was under heavy attack from kamikaze aircraft. Nightly the sky was lit up with tracers and shells from the ships. On occasion an unexploded shell would scream down on our positions, every bit as deadly as enemy fire. Frequently, the beaches and offshore waters were filled with floating Japanese bodies, some of them women and children.

The stench of death was ever present, as were billions of flies from the dead bodies littering the beach.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

On May 11 we policed up the bivouac area, squared away the tank, and shoved off. We moved south to within 500 yards behind front lines. On a distant ridge we could observe Navy TBFs diving and strafing with rockets. Naval guns and artillery were giving their support. The ridges were scarred and marked by heavy shelling. Bivouack-



ing that night, we saw flares dropped continually and heard the thunderous reports of Naval guns, the sharp reports of nearby artillery, and the duller report of more distant artillery. My watch was for one hour and forty minutes in early morning.

The next day, May 12, we moved the tanks to the beach, only 30 yards from our bivouac area. After a short period, we moved the tanks to a nearby field and set up as artillery. After three hours we moved again, about a mile along the coast, and set up for beach defense. Along the beach were Japanese bodies, bloated and discolored from exposure to the elements and, behind the seawall, other decaying bodies, partially covered with dirt.

That night we had a hell of a time. Right after sunset, there was a Jap air raid, with a lot of ack-ack fire. I saw one Jap plane get hit and then dive behind the superstructure of the battleship, *New Mexico*. We were under Jap artillery fire practically all night, with shells dropping in and about our area and shrapnel hitting our tanks. Our B-3 was hit, but no damage was done. Jack (John H.) Trapp was hit by shrapnel, but wasn't hurt. This experience of being shelled scared the hell out of us. First came the whine of the shell—a whistling, dangerous sound—then the sharp report of the explosion, and finally a sound like the buzz of a large bee, as hot, jagged shrapnel cut through the air. The Japanese tried making a seaborne counterlanding that night, but the Navy took care of them. I had the machine gun watch from 0300 to 0600, under fire about half the time. I welcomed the dawn of May 13.

We moved again, south along the beach, and relieved B Company's 3d Platoon for beach defense. From here we could see cruisers and battleships firing over our heads; artillery shelling; planes strafing, bombing and firing rockets; and land tanks reloading with ammo from a nearby dump. I saw the ruined city of Naha for the first time through binoculars. At 1600 we were relieved by A Company and returned to a bivouac we had had two nights before. There Lacy (Paul L.) Harris, our tank commander, cracked under shock from all the shelling of the previous night. The corpsmen gave him blood plasma and evacuated him to a field hospital.

On May 14 we moved back to the Battalion bivouac at III Corps headquarters. Our panel hut was the same way we had left it. We stayed there for three days, working on the tanks, writing letters, and watching kamikaze raids. On May 18, my 21st birthday, we moved south again about three miles to a new bivouac area. We stayed there three days on call for missions in support of the 4th Marines.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

On May 11 we pulled out and moved to a beach somewhere south of Machinato airfield. On the night of May 12 we were shelled like never before. Their first shell hit an ammunition tractor about 75 yards away. From then on the shells landed all around, but miraculously not a tank in our area received a direct hit. There was a lull, then at midnight they started again. Then a lull until morning, when they resumed. The only casualty known to me was Jack (John H.) Trapp, who received a small shrapnel wound.

Kamikazes were still doing their thing, and we heard the battleship *New Mexico* had been hit.

On the 13th we moved up with the lines and relieved B Company's 3d Platoon. I got a glimpse of Naha. Around 1600 we were relieved by A Company, and we moved back. Before nightfall I crawled into B-3 and found our tank commander, Paul L. Harris, in pretty bad shape. He had cracked, and was evacuated to a hospital. On the 14th we moved farther back, near our first bivouac area. We worked on the tanks and even had mail call. I took a good shower. On May 15, my 21st birthday, we received some shelling at night.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

On May 13, Company A replaced Company B for beach defense about five miles south of our bivouac area and about one-half mile south of Machinato airstrip. My tank, A-10, was right up against the seawall at the mouth of the Asa Kawa (Asa River).

I believe it was at this location on the north bank of the Asa Kawa that Lieutenant Charles "Speed" Spilman and I decided we were going to have something hot, and different, to eat. We had had enough of heating up K Rations, C Rations, or the new 10-in-1 Rations. Between the ridge north of the river and the river itself was a cultivated patch of ground. This lay east of a north-south dirt road. The field had been cultivated by shell fire, also, but there were lots of small cabbages, carrots, and sweet potatoes in it. It was against orders to eat native vegetables because the Okinawans used human excrement as fertilizer, but we thought, To hell with that. We went out and started gathering edibles. This was a signal for the Jap observers over by Shuri heights to the east-southeast of us to protest this unauthorized requisition. They promptly started dropping mortar rounds into the garden. I alternately ducked and ran, flopped down and ran. Speed, however, had just taken a sponge bath and put on clean skivvies and dungarees. He wasn't about to get them all muddy again, so he just ran like hell, doing fancy dodging all the while. After all, at the University of Oklahoma I believe, he had been a pretty sharp football player. Anyway, we cut up our vegetables into a helmet, added a can of corned beef and a little water, and soon had it simmering.

Late that same afternoon, the Japs must have figured we had too much activity going on between the road and the seawall, so they dropped some mortars and a few artillery rounds at us. Our H&S Company had run a radio jeep up the road into our area, probably to see just which outfits were where. Anyway, there was an odd-built, big, red-headed H&S corporal or sergeant, whose name I think was Rudy Lieberman, who was in the bracketed area. I can still see him running like hell (and he wasn't used to it) trying to get to the jeep and get the hell back behind the shelter of the ridge. Unsympathetic Gyrenes were laughing and shouting encouragement from the safety of their foxholes.

That night at about 2100 hours, two or three Jap guns, probably again from the Shuri area or the Wana Ridge north of it, opened up on us. That time it lasted about

a half hour. They didn't have to adjust for range. They had it! Bob (Robert W.) Pierce and I were on the first watch, the rest of the crew in their two-man foxholes. The explosions ripped the camouflage netting from the tank and were landing in the area of the foxholes and on top of the seawall. Bob and I had been on the tank when it started, but immediately jumped down behind the seawall. We figured they would hit the tank for sure, and we didn't want to be in or on it. We didn't stop to think that if the tank had been hit, the likelihood was that all the ammo or gasoline inside would probably blow us to hell anyway. So, we crouched down on the coral in a few inches of water. We looked seaward, for I had deduced that the artillery was a diversion to keep us from looking for a seaborne stab at us. I had a knife in one hand and my .45 in the other, having vacated the tank too fast for picking up more substantial weapons. I doubt that Bob had any weapon at all, but our radiomen were a breed apart. He was soon back inside the tank, diddling with the radio's control knobs and speaking to someone in that calm, controlled manner they all had: "Do you read me? A-10 calling..., etc." We did pick up rifles and grenades to better handle the unforeseen. We also made voice contact with our other crew members. Lieutenant "Speed" Spilman gave us a fright because one shell had landed on the edge of his foxhole and he didn't answer up at first. He had vacated that hole, however, for what he (correctly) thought was a better one. Many shells also landed in the sea behind the platoon and in the field in front of us. After that night, Speed tried to sleep inside the tank for a week or so, but that was impossible. It was too hot, too hard, and too cramped for sleep. The Japs repeated their salutation about three more times that night.

During that first barrage, while Bob Pierce (we called him "The Beak") was away from the radio once, another tank tried calling us by phone or radio. I got on the radio and, not in "The Beak's" calm manner, told them that the damned Japs were dropping them right on top of us. Of course, that was a stupid thing to say, for the Japs could have been monitoring our radio frequency or tapped into our phone wires. And I was pointedly told that the next day by the Company CO. When daylight came, we all started digging deeper and more elaborate foxholes. Bob Pierce and I made a beautiful one, adding sand bags and several other embellishments. Then at about 1000 hours, word came that we were moving forward, and all that hard work had been for naught. Damn! It never failed.

SOUTH OF THE ASA KAWA

By May 13 the 6th Marine Division had occupied almost all the coast between Asa Kawa and Asato Gawa, but for almost a week thereafter, almost no further gain was made along the coast. The problem was that, inland from the beach, neither the 6th nor the 1st Marine Divisions could sustain a parallel advance against enemy strongholds on high ground. The 6th Division was held up in a muddy, bloody fight to take a defense complex centered on Sugar Loaf Hill. The 1st Marine Division, in its sector to the left of the 6th, was encountering heavy resistance in the defenses of Wana Ridge and Wana Draw. Not until about May 20 was it possible to secure all the high ground inland, move

forward to straighten the line, and continue the assault on the Naha-Shuri-Yonabaru defenses.

The slowdown inland, however, brought no respite to the First Armored Amphibians. Charged with defense of the beaches, the am tanks were spread along all the shore from north of the Asa Kawa to the Asato Gawa estuary. They were also heavily engaged in artillery missions in support of Marines fighting in the Sugar Loaf Hill area. Throughout the week a platoon was kept in place to deliver direct fire into the town of Naha, expending a total of 2,331 rounds of 75mm HE ammunition. These tasks were carried out under the surveillance, and within easy range, of Japanese artillery on the heights of Sugar Loaf Hill, Shuri, and other vantage points. Enemy air raids against offshore shipping, and infiltration attempts from off the reef, provided extra hazards. Rain and mud, which affected progress on all fronts, made work, sleep, and life in general very difficult. In this period the Battalion moved its headquarters from the Brown Beach area to a beach below Machinato airfield.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

At 1600 on May 14, D Company's 2d Platoon was called away further south to knock off an expected counterattack. The next day the rest of the Company came down. There was plenty of mortar and artillery fire all around us. On the 16th Tank D-14, traveling over rough coral, ripped out its transmission. That evening an airburst got John F. Jakela and Walter L. Knispel, and both had to be evacuated. [We later learned that Knispel lost a leg.] On May 18 we replaced D-14's transmission while artillery airbursts were going off overhead.

On Friday, the 18th, we moved back north to a new Battalion camp on the beach below Machinato airfield. There we set up as artillery and dug in all day. We did artillery work and beach defense. The enemy kept us awake at night firing shells into our area. The night of May 20 was very rugged, with Jap artillery, counterattacks, air raids, and counterlandings going on all at the same time. I hadn't slept for three nights. Heavy rains started, and continued steadily for over a week, adding to the misery of the shelling.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

About mid-May we were moving south towards Naha, the capital city of Okinawa. As always, it was a rather bumpy ride and, of all times, my TCS transmitter quit on me then. I pulled the unit out of its case, expecting the worst, hauled it up, and laid it in front of me on top of the tank. I stood on my seat and started to examine the thing. This was one time I wished I had three hands: one to hold the equipment, a second to hold me, and a third to do the work. One thing about tanks, they don't have shock absorbers. I started to examine the unit for any obvious failure. I lucked out. One of the wires leading to the plate meter had shorted against the panel. The insulating sleeve had rubbed through, leaving a pretty fair burned area. The repair consisted of pushing

the wire away from the panel, and all worked fine. Here I had visions of shorted capacitors, burned-out resistors, or possibly a dynamotor failure. Lucky, lucky, lucky!

I remember the kamikaze raids on our shipping. A ship didn't have much of a chance when a suicidal kamikaze selected it. The ships' gunners did a good job of shooting down their targets, but there were too many targets. For the first time I really felt sorry for the sailors aboard and was glad I was ashore where I could find a foxhole if needed.

Other recollections are of dead enemy soldiers and the many civilians who were casualties. I also stumbled on an area where dead Marines were being processed. They were on stretchers, covered with ponchos, and lined up in neat, orderly rows. They were completely covered except for their shoes. Some of the men had ID tags fastened to their shoes. It was a very emotional experience for me, one I shall never forget.

On one of our beach defense assignments we were adjacent to a vegetable plot, with cabbages and, I believe, carrots. We got some and cooked them in our helmets. I don't know if we cooked them long enough, but they tasted good, the first fresh veggies in almost three months. Another time we came across a supply of the new 5-in-1 rations. They belonged to the Army, but we figured they wouldn't miss a case or two. They weren't bad; sure beat K rations. We also found a large supply tent, which we "borrowed," and that came in handy.

ROBERT A. FISH, Company A

By the way Marines were being brought back in shelter halves and ponchos to a large grave site just below our bivouac area, we all knew there was serious fighting ahead of us. We soon moved down just below Machinato airfield to a seawall, where we were on the lookout for any Jap landing party. We landed on several small islands offshore, but found no Japs.

One day Lt. Colonel Louis Metzger and I were in a jeep heading for the front lines to find an observation post from which to direct artillery fire. Seeing a commotion in front of us, we stopped the jeep. A party of Marines were trying to get a Jap out of a culvert under the road. He came out swinging his sword, but didn't last long.

The fighting was getting pretty bloody around Sugar Loaf Hill, Shuri Castle, and Naha. One day, looking for a new artillery observation post, Colonel Metzger and I went up to a ridge overlooking Naha. The Colonel was cool as a cucumber, but I was shaking like a leaf. The whole valley was erupting in gunfire, mortars, artillery, naval bombardment, air bombardment, and screaming and yelling.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

About this time I was ordered from the Battalion to the staff of the 6th Marine Division to be the Assistant Operations Officer. That lasted only a few days, until the Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, informed the Division commander

I was not under his administrative command and that I was to be returned to my battalion.

One of the First Armored company commanders reported the loss of his map case, which contained the classified "shackle code." This code was used in connection with a gridded map to identify locations on the terrain. It provided only limited security, but in the hands of the Japanese it would have been disastrous. I debated reporting it to higher headquarters as I assumed it had been just lost, and its compromise meant that all air, ground and naval units in the Okinawa operation would have to change their shackle code. I decided I had to make the report, however, and did so, causing hundreds of units to use a new code. Fortunate that I did. Several days later a Japanese soldier was shot and killed, and he had the missing map case with him. This caused no little concern in the Division headquarters as the orders were that this code could not be taken forward of a battalion headquarters. Fate was with us, for my headquarters was closer to the enemy than the company headquarters. Our luck held!

GEORGE F. ROBERTS, Company D

We got to watch a lot of the kamikazes. I saw three of them dive on the *New Mexico*, and at least one crashed up high on the superstructure and exploded. One Jap came over the island on a long low glide, almost over our heads, and fired some rockets at an LST. Everyone was shooting at him. That's when Michael A. McGann, tank commander of D-15, got hit by 20mm shrapnel from one of the LSTs.

We took a lot of heat from an 8-inch gun the Japs would run in and out of a tunnel. Sometimes they would hit the water between us and create an airburst. Fortunately their powder was wet, and seven out of eight rounds would be duds. In some ways the duds were worse than the live ones. They took some of our guys away with war nerves. One night a Jap plane dropped a stick of bombs not too far away—the only bombs I ever heard, but I knew right away what it was. Also one night I heard a Screaming Meemie rocket, probably fired by the Japs from near Shuri Castle. Someone said they were about the size of a 50-gallon drum. Now that will put the fear into you!

The flies there were like bees going back and forth to water. The smells weren't any picnic either.

Ted "Zip" Sheppard, Company D

Early in the evening of May 16 our positions came under fire from Japanese artillery. Walter L. Knispel, John F. Jakela, and some Marine infantrymen were hit and evacuated. (Later we heard that Knispel lost his leg.) Captain Theodore A. Burge and I were busy half the night helping the wounded, for I returned to the tank three times for a flashlight, the corpsman, and first aid. I held the light while the corpsman treated the wounded. We were under Jap fire most of the night.

CHARLES E. PERKINS, Company B

On Okinawa Dick (Richard C.) Woolf and I were in a hole outside of our tank, B-1, while the Japs were throwing airbursts overhead. I was shivering, and asked Dick if he was cold. "No," he said, "Just scared as hell."

Donald C. Houston, Company B

One evening, when we had set up for beach defense on southern Okinawa, we heard an incoming round coming from out at sea. It hit right in back of us, but did not explode. Later we found that the round had gone right through a towel someone had hung up on a telephone line right near us. We decided later that it might have been a dud from a parachute flare which a destroyer was firing from off shore.

EDWARD G. RIZKALLA, Company C

I remember being in our tank and being shelled. Four times I heard whistles, each one louder and closer, and each explosion louder and louder. The fourth whistle was so loud I thought it was the end. I waited for the explosion, but there was none. I waited a couple of minutes, then looked out of the turret. About twenty feet from me was this bomb about two feet long that hadn't gone off. I still thank God for that.

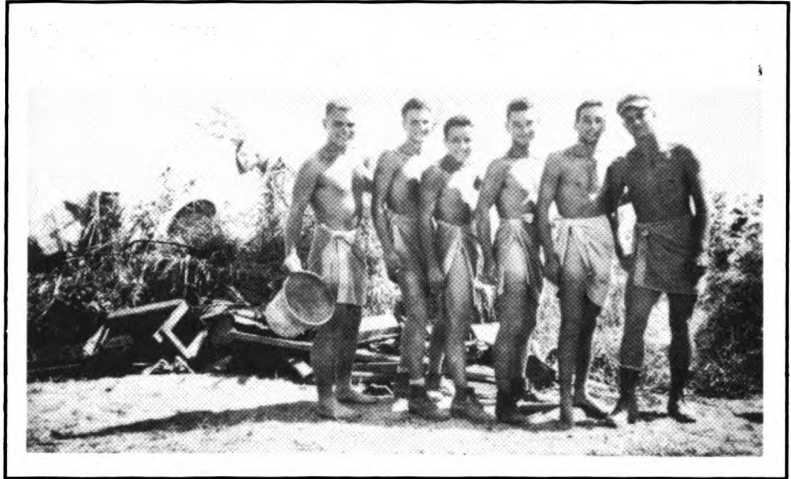
About the same time I was on guard duty one night at about 0200 or 0300. By moonlight I saw two Japs coming off the reef toward me on the beach. I was armed with a Thompson submachine gun, but found it was too dark to sight them with the weapon. But I fired and, by the moonlight, used the splashing of the bullets as my guide toward them. I emptied 80 rounds into and around them. I woke up half the Company. When we went out in the amtank, we couldn't find them.

Whenever we got a chance to bathe on Okinawa, we would take advantage of it, for there were no showers on the island. Cy (Cyril J.) Schneid and I found a well and were taking a bath out in the open. A sniper started firing at us. I could see the bullets spitting at my feet. You never saw two naked guys pick up their clothes and get out of a place so fast.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

On May 14 we moved to a seawall north of Yukino Saki (Cape Yukino), just north of Naha. The 3d Platoon was about 300 yards south of our 2d Platoon position. The coast there was quite rough, with big jagged rocks and low, but steep, craggy hills rising up a short distance from the seawall. Just before dusk "The Beak" (Robert W. Pierce) and I and about four others ran phone lines from our platoon up to the observation point (OP) for the 3d Battalion, 22d Marines. The OP was on top of a cliff, overlooking Naha. The purpose of the tie-in was for our mutual protection. We could provide backup artillery fire if called upon, and they could fire flares up for us at night if requested. The OP was in a big shell hole on the edge of the cliff, looking south. I

looked through a huge pair of Jap binoculars they had there on a tripod and could see two companies of the 22d Marines dug in on the south side of the Asato Gawa (Asato River) that ran west along the north side of Naha out into Naha Harbor. While we were up there, the Japs threw a couple of mortar rounds onto the cliff top. The Beak hastily connected the phone lines, and we departed. Just as we got back to the 3d Platoon area, we heard the scream of incoming artillery, and I dove into a hole on top of Gunny Daniel H. Maynard, who was on top of someone else. When we "wire men" returned to our platoon, "Speed" (Lieutenant Charles Spilman) was extremely glad to see us and told us so.



Just before taking a bath out of a well on Okinawa, six men of the 3d Platoon, Company C: Harold I. Sommers, Dan O. Eriksen, Michael J. Scuderi, Franklin Bonnes, Frank P. Di Julio, Robert C. Blaemire.

(Blaemire)

When we hit our foxhole on the night of May 14, it was raining, and we had received a few rounds from what we thought was an 8-inch naval gun in the hills east of Naha. When Robert W. Pierce and I took the 1130-0230 watch, it was still sprinkling lightly. About 2400 hours the 3d Platoon opened up with everything they had. At 0300 William L. Aydelotte heard someone bump a wire we had strung in front of the tanks on the land side. We had tin cans containing small stones hung on the wire so that, if someone bumped the wire, the cans would rattle. As we had phone hookups between the platoon's tanks, we could talk with one another. About ten minutes later, a flare went up, and I saw three or four Japs crouched over and running like hell for the face of the cliff. I was too surprised to shoot and asked "Nazi" (Sergeant Kramer G. Bohnenberger) if he had seen them. He had, so I told him I would open up with my tommy gun if I saw any of them again. Soon I did see one of them move and opened up with 12 rounds from the tommy gun, but I must have missed by a mile. (I never again chose a tommy gun.) This alerted the rest of the platoon, which spotted more on the reef and opened fire. This kept up for about an hour, but we hit nothing. I guess the Japs kept from getting hit by hitting the deck and crawling along crevices in the coral. When dawn came, we found that the 3d Platoon had killed eight, obtaining a nice samurai sword and a pistol. We received some more artillery fire at dawn, which made the 3d Platoon withdraw around a bend and out of the line of fire.

About noon on May 15, the 2d Platoon pulled into close position and fired about three hours at Naha. As I was computing for the guns in the FDC, I can confirm we

used charge #3 and fired 425 rounds at a range of 2900 yards. We fired on cliffs, caves, etc., and the FO (forward observer) reported back that we had got some Japs. The 2d Battalion, 4th Marines, preparing to move out the next day, moved up and dug in along the cliff about 100 yards behind us. That night all was quiet except for an air raid and also, while I was on my 0230-0600 watch, some gunfire in the 4th Marines area behind us, where they shot five Nips. Robert W. Pierce and I watched two Nip planes sail around in the beams of search lights for about half an hour, but didn't see them get hit. They dropped some bombs down by Yontan airfield. We got some artillery fire at dawn on the 16th. At noon that day we were relieved by D Company and went back to the Battalion bivouac area.

Back in camp we cleaned our machine guns, the 75mm, and personal pieces. About this time, while the Sugar Loaf battle was see-sawing back and forth, a bunch of green replacement troops came along the seawall. We got to talking with them while they rested on the ground in our area. Most were just out of boot camp and were pretty bewildered. I had to walk away from them and go behind the tank so they would not see the tears in my eyes. We knew where they were going and had a pretty good idea that a good share of them wouldn't be alive two days from then.

Albert E. Powers, Company D

The rains were torrential when we camped on the seawall below Machinato airfield. Someone in the D-14 squad found a Japanese tent, light olive green in color. We tried to put it up for some protection from the rain and sun. We didn't have the proper poles and stakes, so we just stretched it out as well as we could. As it turned out, it had a lot of leaks, and we abandoned it when we moved on to our next position.

CLOSING IN ON NAHA

With Sugar Loaf Hill, Wana Ridge, and Wana Draw behind them, the 1st and 6th Marine Divisions might have resumed their advance on the Naha-Shuri-Yonabaru line if the weather had not made it almost impossible. In the last ten or twelve days of May 1944, the rain was almost unceasing, so bad that the campaign bogged down. It was virtually impossible for any transport vehicles to travel in the deep mud, and even movement on foot was difficult. Food, ammunition, and other necessities for front line troops had to be air-dropped.

The 6th Marine Division dug in on high ground along the north side of the Asato Gawa (Asato River), overlooking Naha, the capital city. The Japanese were in caves and ravines to the south, in the cliffs above Shuri, above Naha, and on the Oroku Peninsula. For the First Armored the week after May 20 differed little from the previous week. As pressure on failing Japanese defenses increased, many enemy soldiers tried to escape, or infiltrate, by moving north by sea or along the reef. These efforts made beach defense more important than ever. Even in the rain, artillery duels continued between

the 15th Marines and the First Armored on one side and Japanese gunners on the other.

Despite the rain and mud, the week was most eventful for amtank crews, the events consisting mostly of being bombarded by the enemy. Three incidents, however, made the official battle reports. At 2150 on May 21, Navy ships discovered and sank enemy barges moving north, along the coast. When survivors tried to come ashore at a sector defended by the First Armored, the amtank crews fired, killing an estimated 50 of them. At 0500 on May 26, an enemy suicide boat was destroyed by automatic weapons of a First Armored platoon. For three days, May 25–27, the guns of the 15th Marines and the First Armored engaged in an indirect-fire "Time on Target" mission, the simultaneous firing of all guns at a single target.

Even though the American offensive had bogged down, General Ushijima knew that his situation was deteriorating and that he could no longer hold his Naha-Shuri-Yonabaru perimeter. He, accordingly, used the lull in the fighting and the cover provided by bad weather to withdraw the remnants of his army—about 50,000 men—to a new defense line eleven miles to the south. Partly as a diversion to cover the withdrawal, Tokyo launched a new well-timed kamikaze assault, *Kikisui-7* on May 23–25, which included attempted landings on Yontan and other airfields on Okinawa and Ie Shima. General Ushijima also ordered special bombardment of American positions and sent



Antiaircraft tracers in the night sky as Marines fight off a Japanese air attack on Yontan airfield. (USMC)

barges of troops northward along the coast for possible landings behind U.S. lines. The weather did make it difficult to track enemy troop movements from the air but, besides that, the Tenth Army high command refused to interpret the fleeting reports of air spotters as evidence of a general retreat. The Japanese, therefore, carried out a successful withdrawal, with few losses. Their new defense line ran along an escarpment near the southern tip of Okinawa. When it became clear what was happening, U.S. shelling and bombing of traffic along the roads was too late, and killed more fleeing civilians than soldiers.

Although First Armored troops had for three weeks been heavily engaged in the Battle for Naha, they were not to participate in the actual seizure of the city. Navy plans for an altogether new invasion resulted in a brief suspension of the Battalion's operations on Okinawa.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

At 0900 on May 21 we moved in a choppy sea to a beach across the Asato Gawa estuary from Naha. We set the tanks up along the coral seawall for defense and were also on call by the 4th Marines. We saw a Forward Observer plane shot down at sea and an LCI and an LCM, both of them under Japanese fire, search for survivors, but we didn't learn if they were successful. Marine patrols were in Naha, but the city had not yet been secured. We remained there for four days, mostly in the rain, frequently receiving enemy fire. Ralph R. McCormack's tank was damaged in the hull, catwalk, and tracks by shrapnel from a shell that just missed a direct hit.

On May 25, we were relieved by A Company and moved to a new Battalion camp about 2½ miles north of Naha. Company C was firing artillery from there, and we set our tanks up in battery position. I was surprised to see Lacy (Paul L.) Harris, returned to duty from the hospital. We spent a week there, most of it in rain and mud.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

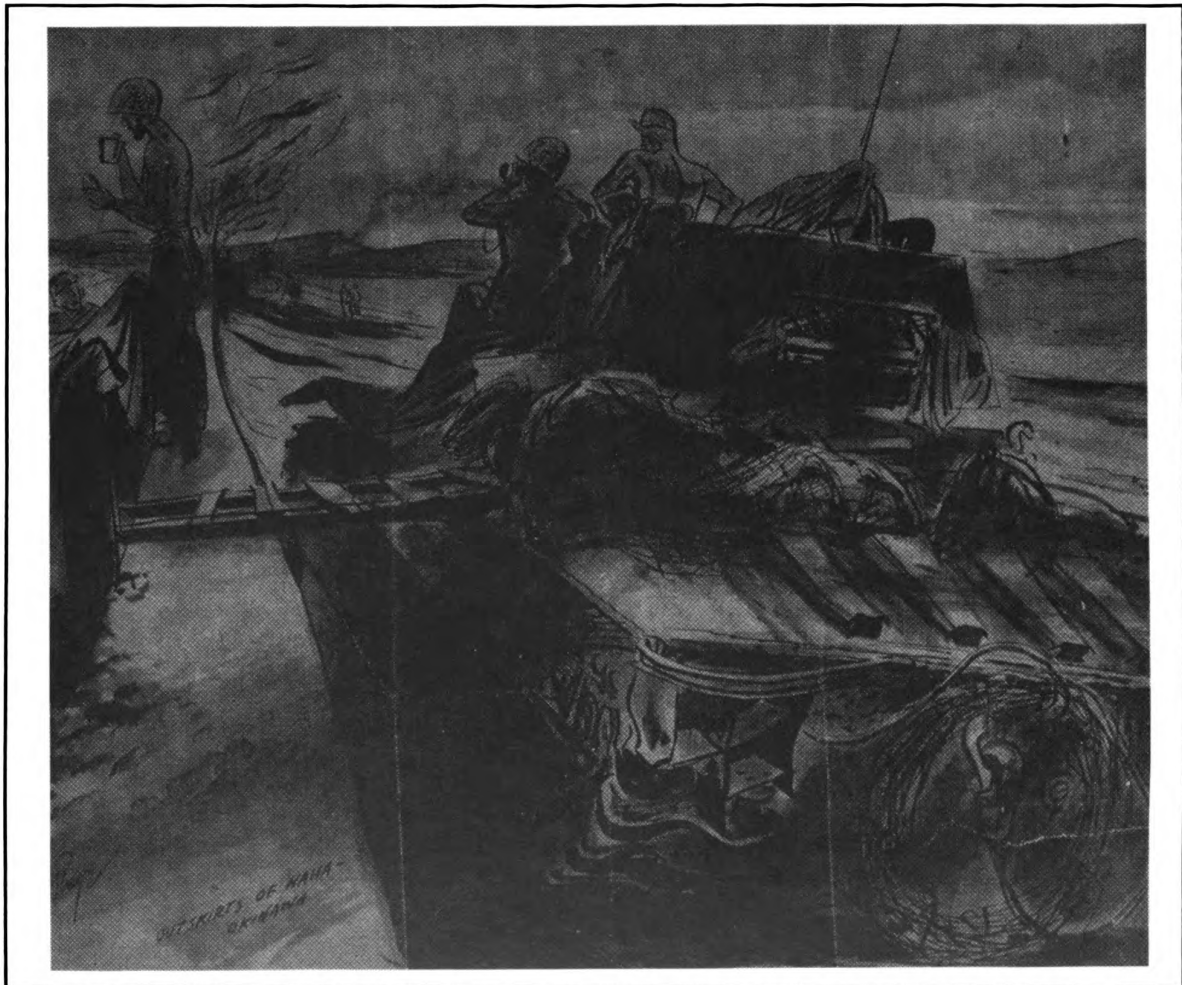
On May 21 we moved up to the front lines just north of the Asato Gawa estuary. A piper cub was shot down right in front of us, just off Naha. Lieutenant Irwin Ronald Buckner and his crew went out in Tank B-2 to pick up the two pilots, for which he later was given the bronze star.

The weather continued miserable with torrential rains. The night of the 23d was a fun night, if you can call it that. The Jap artillery piece across the way continued to fire on us direct. They could see us, and that was bad, but we were dug in good. Every time they fired, the flash could be seen, and this gave us enough time to duck and then watch for the next. They did get one of our tanks, Ralph R. McCormack's B-4.

On May 25, A Company relieved us. Heavy and constant rain, with the accompanying mud, continued.

ROBERT A. FISH, Company A

We finally set up just outside of Naha, where the forward observation team and I had found a good spot on the military crest of a ridge overlooking Naha and the port. The Battalion's firing batteries were about 1000 yards to the rear with a natural mask in front. The battleships and cruisers were shelling the area constantly. We could hear the projectiles going overhead like freight trains. Once in a while you could catch their flight with your eyes. We had a very good observation position, from which to see across the harbor and observe the airfield and surrounding territory. We were adjusting the fire with WP (white phosphorous) rounds to get on target, and the Battalion batteries were firing for effect in a very professional manner. We could cover a target area with a lot of explosive, flame, and smoke.



A First Armored Company B amtank by the seawall south of the Asa Kawa, north of Naha. Sketch by an artist for a cover of *Yank*, the Army's magazine for service men. (Houston)

From about May 25 we had a TOT (time on target) firing exercise that included the entire 6th Division. The 155mm Long Toms, 155mm howitzers, 105mm guns, 105mm howitzers, and our LVTA 75mm howitzers were all firing at the target simultaneously. The effect was awe-inspiring, with all the rounds hitting in the target area. I want to commend all the Marines and gun crews in our outfit who were handling the firing.

One day when it started to rain in our observation post, we made the mistake of putting up a poncho to protect the radios and telephones. A Jap observer spotted our poncho, and pretty soon we were taking fire from Shuri Castle. The projectiles were exploding in the rocks around us. Then a round came that had lost its rotating band and was going end over end. It landed fairly close to the observation team, but did not explode. It must have been a dud. Anyway I told the team to pack up our gear, and we got the hell out of there. It was too dangerous, and the shellfire was getting too close. The Jap observer had us bracketed and may have been ready for the kill.

THOMAS T. OYLER, Company C

Shortly before approaching Naha, Colonel Metzger sent me, Payton C. Montgomery, and Al (Alphonse W.) Scerbo in a radio jeep down to a lookout spot to see if we could cross the river and take the direct approach to Naha. We went past Sugar Loaf Hill, and past many Japanese bodies, on our way to an observation spot up on a mound. There we found two Marines in a deep foxhole. Shortly after our arrival, three missiles of some sort whizzed by just above our heads. I ducked. One of the guys manning the post said to me, "Don't pay any attention to him. I've been here three days, and that's as close as he can get." The steep bank and the river mud led me to believe that our equipment wasn't suited for such an assault. That was the message we carried back.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

Toward the end of May we moved back down to the ocean for beach defense, staying in one position for three days. The 29th Marines were on the beach with us on the 23d-24th, having been relieved for a rest after getting hell shot out of them up on Sugar Loaf. Before we got back to the bivouac area on May 28, we did beach defense about 1200 yards north from the center of Naha. It rained all the time we were there. For the nine days beginning with May 19, eighteen inches of rain fell. I had never been so damned wet in my life. One night our 2d Platoon got credit for destroying a Nip small boat loaded with explosives. Because the boat had a real silent motor, I could not hear it at first, and it was just about impossible to discern in the darkness. One member of the Platoon wanted to take a shot at it to see if it was what we thought. I didn't agree, but he did it anyway. When he shot, the boat's motor opened up full throttle and really started to move. One of our machine guns and several rifles started firing then and must have hit the explosives, because it blew up with a terrific blast and concussion. More than likely it was heading for the biggest concentration of ships so as to ram into one.

The rains kept on, and it was about this time that I got sick. For about four days I lay on the topside deck of our tank, beneath a tarp. One day Lieutenant Charles "Speed" Spilman sent me a few hundred yards down the beach to an aid station. The corpsman said I probably had dengue fever and gave me a few APCs (like acetaminophen). I shuffled back to my place on top of the tank. The rainy period at that time was so bad that nothing on wheels or tracks moved. It was difficult even to walk because of mud. Food and munitions had to be air-dropped to front-line troops because no other means was possible.

One evening, just at dark, there was a hell of a "CRACK!" a few yards away from us. We were between and behind big jagged boulders, inland from the sea a hundred yards or so, and could see Naha to our left front. Soon afterward we received another. We surmised it was a 47mm high-velocity gun, as there was no traditional screaming of the incoming shell; it was just there suddenly with that loud, sharp crack. We were told to count the seconds between the gun's flash and the explosion. We could see the flash in the heights southeast of the city's center. All told, it fired six or seven times at us, with hardly any time between the flash and the crack. We reported the timed interval, and soon our artillery blasted its source. It fired no more that night. We didn't counterfire because of the location our tanks were in.

While in that location I put a couple of grenades out on trip wires. I put them where I thought I would have come, if I had been a Jap sneaking up to our location. It was a narrow draw or passageway, between boulders and rocks, and at high tide would have about a foot of water. I had them out for two or three nights. One morning when I got out of my foxhole I looked about 50 feet to my right and saw ten to twelve Marines there, most of them sleeping. I walked over and asked where in hell they had come from and what outfit they were. They were a reconnaissance platoon and had been in Naha all night. Except for those guys, the city had not been entered yet by Marines. I sure didn't envy them their jobs, prowling around in that place full of Japs. I also wondered how they got past my trip wire without setting off my grenades. When I checked soon after, the wire was okay. The recon platoon must have come a different way. I put the safety pins back in the grenades and collected them. I sure didn't want to kill our own people.

It was while in this area that one day I looked up on a small solitary cliff, a separate spire from the rest. I could see a niche in the face of the cliff, facing Naha, and something in the niche. I climbed up to it and removed a small burial jar, about 20 inches tall. It was very primitive and had very old bone fragments in it. I replaced it back in its niche.

There were a lot of dead Japs in that location, both in and out of the water. At high tide the wave motion kept the head of one Jap beating against the tank's side. I was cleaning a machine gun up on the tank deck one morning and found maggots in the gun and all over the deck. We sat there with them, eating the morning's ration. We didn't have many regular hot meals the whole time we were on the island. Except when we were in a couple of our bivouac areas, the only hot meals we had were the result of

building a fire and heating a can of something over it.

On May 27 I was again in an observation post overlooking Naha and saw the 22d Marines making a drive through part of the city. At daybreak on the 31st the 3d Platoon killed three Japs dressed in civilian clothing as they tried to come ashore from the reef. When I got up that morning, I saw them about 300 yards out in the water. When a couple of shots had been fired, one stood up as if to surrender, but the machine guns cut him down.

DALE L. BARKER, Company D

While we were doing beach defense, not far north of Naha, I awoke early one morning to the sound of gunfire right in our bivouac. In a tank position near us, one of the younger men, who had been on watch, saw a Jap walking toward him from off the reef. The Marine challenged him, but didn't fire right away, and the fellow just kept moving closer. About that time Harold Greenblatt, in the same tank crew, woke up in his foxhole, looked around, saw the situation, and fired. The Jap fell, but a grenade he was about to throw exploded in his hand.

ROBERT W. PIERCE, Company A

Our job was to maintain watch along the seawall. A road led out of Naha and ran parallel with the wall northward. Japanese civilians—mostly women, children, and old men—were evacuating Naha and walking the road northward to find refuge. Enemy soldiers masquerading as civilians were infiltrating our lines by intermingling with them, then escaping to the north. Some soldiers would wade out on the coral reef and try to move north by sea. Since we carried artillery shells in the hull of our tanks, we were powder kegs and couldn't risk having a grenade thrown in or near the vehicle. We shot a number of Japanese while on the seawall watch.

We climbed to a rise near the seawall when the Navy bombers were attacking Naha. We could see the projectiles hurtling through the air, hitting the target and then hear the sound of the explosion a few seconds later. The smoke spiraled from the burning buildings.

The area adjacent to the seawall was fertile farm land. We had been warned against eating any of the crops because the natives used human feces for fertilizer. It had been a while since we had eaten a hot meal, so we risked boiling a head of cabbage, for a *very, very* long time, using our helmets for a stew pot. With the corned beef which came in our B rations, we had a gourmet meal.

Gaping shell holes in the rice paddies filled with rain water, thus providing excellent bathing facilities. One of the worst storms we experienced was a typhoon which hit while we were manning the seawall. It lasted about two days, and we spent most of our time under a canvas tarp draped over the back side of the wall. When we had the watch, we sought refuge from the storm in the hull of the tank.

DONALD SCHARF, Company D

Fleas on Okinawa were terrible, entrenching themselves inside our clothes and feasting without any pity. Mosquitoes were large, hungry, and merciless. I kept on taking atabrine daily. I got used to K rations, but preferred C rations. When the continuous heavy rains came, the terrain became slippery and the mud deeper and deeper. Mechanized vehicles bogged down and stalled in the goo. Mud clung to our boots and seemed to stick to everything. The nights became colder, adding to the miserable conditions.

In the second week of May, Dog Company was sent south to assist the 6th Marine Division near Naha. On a night I remember in particular we moved our tanks to a point 1000 yards offshore. The tide went out, and we settled in as darkness fell. We had two machine guns on the deck of our tank, and another tank had a large spotlight mounted on its deck. Sitting there quietly, deep in our own thoughts, we heard a potch, potch, potch sound coming nearer to our position. With our spotlight we saw there a wave of Japs coming toward us, and more coming out of a drainpipe at the shore. We hit them with everything we had. They were no match for our firepower, but still they kept coming. As daylight began to break the darkness, all was quiet, and the tide was returning. Dead Jap bodies began to float and bob around in the water. The stench was nauseating. We were glad to move our tanks out and away.

JAMES C. CHANDLER, Company B

For several days we were set up on a beach near Naha, the capital of Okinawa. One night, when the Japs were trying to move troops by barge north behind our lines, they covered the landings by bombing and shelling the beaches, using many airbursts. While Hal (Harold E.) Jones and I were on watch, standing in a slit in the seawall, we had an airburst almost directly overhead and real low. Neither of us was hit. In fact, during this long night, no one in our outfit got hurt, but an outfit about 50 yards behind us must have been hit pretty hard. All night long they were calling for corpsmen.

While in the area near Naha, we could see Oroku Peninsula, where the Japs had 6- or 8-inch coastal rifles. The end of the peninsula was some three or four miles away. Our naval guns, airplanes, and artillery could not knock out those guns. I suppose we wanted to play a little, so we lobbed three or four rounds of 75mm over that way, and the Japs fired on us. One shell hit in front of a tank (B-4, I believe), blowing out quite a hole in the seawall. Louie J. Neal was sitting in the driver's seat, and a piece of shrapnel came through the armor and buried itself in the driver's seat. Louie got a small scratch. After about the second round, I started looking for a deeper hole. Hal (Harold E.) Jones told me to take it easy, and I told him they were using 8-inch coastal rifles on us, and that was not fair.

One night near Naha, I watched as one of our ships sank. I never found out for sure, but I think it was either a light or heavy cruiser. For some two hours it burned and was shaken by explosions. Two or three times it seemed to rise out of the water from

an explosion, only to settle back to burn and suffer more explosions. I wondered how anything could withstand such violent explosions and still float. After the ship went down, sometime during my watch before daylight, I spotted two Japs out on the reef trying to sneak around us to get back to their lines. I opened up with a .30-caliber machine gun. The next morning I had a strange sick feeling when the tide washed their bodies up on the beach at our position.

We had been on C rations for quite a while when we were pulled back and camped next to an Army unit and an Army supply dump. They had 10-in-1 rations, which we had never seen. We made up a work party, went to the dump, and every man carried off two cases. In just a little while an Army lieutenant came looking for an "illegal work party and about 200 cases of 10-in-1 rations." Unfortunately for him, he had gotten some wrong information and had the wrong outfit. We never ate so well. I remember real bacon and ham. I found a small head of cabbage in a nearby garden and made some cabbage soup.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

On Saturday, May 26, eighty-eight batteries were firing simultaneously at concentrated targets behind the enemy lines. Meanwhile, the maintenance crews worked to keep the tanks operating. One day I repaired tracks on D-8 and D-9, ten links of track on D-8 and six links on D-9.

THE CHICHI JIMA INTERLUDE

In the spring of 1945 most members of the First Armored Amphibian Battalion had never heard of Chichi Jima, a Japanese stronghold in the Bonin Islands. Neither did they hear of it afterward, as long as the war lasted. Yet, it was an invasion planned for Chichi Jima that gave the Battalion a ten-day break from the conflict on Okinawa. On May 26, the Third Armored Amphibian Battalion was detached from Lt. Colonel Metzger's command. The next day, May 27, orders were issued by Tenth Army, detaching the First Armored from the 6th Marine Division. It was necessary to recall to the Battalion bivouac area all the amtanks deployed along the beaches and seawalls as far south as the Asato Gawa. Some tank crews were still in defense position on May 28 and 29. Repairs and servicing began immediately for all combat-worthy vehicles, and replacements were acquired for those too badly damaged. Men and tanks were soon freshly outfitted for combat.

On June 1 the Battalion prepared to strike camp, and its motor transport moved out. On that same day a ceremony was held, at which Major General Lemuel C. Shepherd, commanding the 6th Marine Division, awarded decorations to, according to one report, five officers and 22 enlisted men. On June 2 amtanks and crews, except for Company D, left camp and boarded LSTs. Company D remained ashore one more day before boarding LST 819, which was reported to have run aground. Most of the men

thought they were leaving Okinawa and bound for Saipan. The ships did not depart however. They stood offshore for two days, then moved up the coast a short distance, into Nago Wan, for protection from heavy weather associated with a typhoon.

On June 5 the ships returned south to a beach near Yontan airfield, where in the afternoon the Battalion disembarked and moved ashore. That night and through the next day and night, lashed by driving rain, we camped in rice paddy mud behind the seawall. The men were told that the First Armored had been scheduled for a new early invasion, but had been called back. Actually the invasion of Chichi Jima had been canceled, a fortunate decision for all concerned. Chichi Jima was a major Japanese naval base, formidably fortified. An assault there could have been as bloody as Iwo Jima.

On June 6 the Battalion was reattached to the 6th Marine Division, and on the 7th all am tanks, crews, and motor transport moved south to take up positions in Naha.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

On Wednesday, May 30, we heard we had been released from the 6th Marine Division and were to leave Okinawa for another combat mission. We surveyed D-7 and D-9 on Thursday and stowed a combat load of ammunition on all the other tanks. On Friday we prepared to break camp, had our last "jolly" [i.e., galley] meal at 1400, and then gathered to see 27 First Armored men receive decorations. Reveille on Saturday, June 2, was at 0515, and we broke camp to go aboard ship. Then we learned that the ship had run aground so that we had to stay on that rock another night. We left Okinawa in our tanks at 0800 on Sunday, we thought for good, boarded LST 819 at 1000, and stood offshore. That first evening we saw a movie, *The Great Gildersleeve*. It was still raining.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

In late May we received orders to get ready for a landing on Chichi Jima, a large island well to the north of Okinawa. I made two trips to the supply depot, still located on Green Beach, miles to the north over mud-bogged roads. First I had to requisition the supplies and equipment, then get the depot commander's response. At the same time an Army ordnance battalion was to assist us in repairing our battle-worn LVTAs. The Army "experts" had to be shown how to start our vehicle's engines, which turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Not knowing anything about the vehicles, they accepted our evaluation and issued us the necessary replacement vehicles. The depot was another matter. The colonel in command, in line with the long cherished Marine Corps supply policy of keeping everything on the shelves, informed me that he could provide us nothing. Fresh from many days of combat, I exploded and told him to put that in writing so the General would know whom to court-martial. We got our needed supplies and equipment.

We were pulled off the line and, on 1 June, embarked in some LSTs in prepara

tion for our movement and attack on Chichi Jima. We did get some hot food and showers, but never got underway. Several days later we were ordered back to shore and rejoined the 6th Marine Division. The operation had been canceled. We appreciated the rest, but returning to combat so soon had a down side; no doubt, however, it was better than another combat landing.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

On June 1 we had a ceremony at which General Lemuel C. Shepherd found time to make some awards of medals. The Battalion had been detached from the 6th Marine Division.

On June 2 we boarded LST 1013, dogged down the tanks, and retired topside. It was nice to be treated to Navy chow. On the 5th our LST and twelve others left the southern anchorage and sailed to a northern anchorage. Then, the next day they returned to the southern anchorage. Snafu? Not really. I had no complaints for, after all, that was war.

GEORGE F. ROBERTS, Company D

We'd been on Okinawa about two months and were told to get rid of surplus gear and go aboard an LST. We were on the LST a few days when they kicked us off, back on the beach. I don't know if we even had rations. One of my crew and I walked over to an Army outfit and gave the supply sergeant a tale of woe that almost had him in tears. He gave us a 10-pound can of New Zealand coffee, so we were okay again.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

Things seemed all fouled up as usual. The scuttlebutt was that we were to go on another invasion from Saipan, but were replaced by another outfit.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

On June 2 we boarded LST 1014, believing we were leaving for Saipan. For two days we stood off the Okinawa coast because of a typhoon threat. The skipper moved all of us below decks because of the expected storm. We thought we would see no more of Okinawa with its empty guts, wet clothes, wet foxholes, mosquitos, snakes, flies, and rations. While aboard ship we had fresh eggs! Also steak, onions, celery, and cake. We thought, hell! These swabbies don't even know there's a war on—until, that is, the kamikazes come over again.

On the 5th we pulled back to the beach about two miles south of Yontan, and the whole battalion got off the ships. Company A got some beer from the ship's skipper. His own crew had broken into the beer locker on the tank deck and stolen several cases and, when it was discovered, pointed the finger at us. Actually they just beat us to it. Anyway, the captain gave or sold the beer to our CO, Captain Thomas J. "Joe" Garfield. This was doled out to us once we got settled on the beach, each man getting five or six

cans. A-10's crew huddled under a tarp, drinking theirs in a driving rain. That night about ten of us, in our ponchos, went stumbling across rice paddies and wading creeks, to get to a doggie movie being shown because we were in a "safe zone."

HARRY PAUL, Company D

On Monday, June 4, the ship moved to waters off the Motobu Peninsula to get out of an expected typhoon. It was raining like Hades. We moved back south the next morning and received word we were to go back ashore. We left the ship at 1430, reached the beach at 1530, and made camp for the night right on the beach in the rain and mud—plenty of mud. On Wednesday, still in the mud, I pulled and replaced the engine on D-15. Then we spent another night on the same beach, and continued there until noon the next day.

THE BATTLE FOR OROKU PENINSULA

Naha had been taken by the time the First Armored Amphibian Battalion reentered the Okinawa conflict, and the Battle for Oroku Peninsula was already in progress. On June 7 the Battalion moved into Naha and its environs and took up defense positions along the Asato Kawa estuary, around Naha harbor (Naha Ko), within the devastated city itself, and even on little Ona Yama island in the center of the inner harbor.

NAHA

Ravaged by weeks of intensive shelling and bombing, Naha was a deserted ruin. So complete was the destruction, that men sometimes speculated on what the remnants of buildings might once have been, whether a school, warehouse, auditorium, or what. There were still snipers in the area and some gunfire was received from the high ground of Oroku Peninsula south of the harbor. Naha became the Battalion headquarters, from June 7 to 16, in the Battle for Oroku.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

When we got to the Naha area, it was a terrible sight. Not much was left standing, just bricks and more bricks lying about. There wasn't anything left of the city.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

By the end of May the city of Naha had been taken by reconnaissance and infantry troops. The command post of the First Armored Amphibian Battalion was established in a city that had been leveled. From the odor it was obvious many bodies were in the rubble. I was tempted to take the lighthouse as my command post, but remembering the danger of being in an obvious landmark, and thus an inviting target, chose instead a partially standing building further back from the harbor. Good thing!

The next morning the lighthouse had been blown away.

The main bank on Okinawa was located in Naha. I came by when some Marines, having blown open the safes, were throwing Japanese money in the air, lighting cigarettes off it, and scattering it about. I stopped to pick up several bank notes for souvenirs and went on. Later, when I participated in the occupation and surrender of Japan, I found it was still legal currency and realized I had passed up a real financial bonanza.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

Since almost everything was secure north of Naha, Steve Marusky and I took off that first day for a look-see. The harbor was littered with damaged Japanese ships, barges, tugs, and even huge cargo and transport vessels. LCM after LCM came into the harbor, evacuated the wounded, and took them out for transfer to an LCT to be transferred to a hospital ship.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

On June 8 I went sightseeing through the center part of Naha. Buildings that must have been beautiful before were now ruins. I went through a ruined opera house, gutted by fire, its concrete walls still standing but marked by gaping shell holes. Walking down what was probably the main street of downtown Naha, I realized it would take a long time to rebuild. Fighting was still going on just south of Naha. Our 155mm howitzers were scattered throughout the wrecked city. Traffic on the main road was heavy with trucks, jeeps, and military vehicles of all kinds.

ROBERT A. FISH, Company A

I remember our first night in Naha, close to a leather tannery near a main supply road. All night long trucks were going to and from the front line, moving at 40 miles per hour. We could see no drivers' heads, just a couple of hands on the steering wheel. The drivers were looking for cover by keeping their heads down.

THOMAS T. OYLER, Company C

Company C had a beach defense position at Naha, and later spent a night south of Naha on the west side of the mainland to prevent Japanese bottled up on Oroku Peninsula from infiltrating to the north by water. We had only one customer, who submerged the minute he saw us.

WILLIS D. BOOTH, Company D

One night while we were bivouacked in an old shipyard in Naha, I had the last watch. One of the duties on the last watch was to start a fire and make coffee. I waited until it was daylight and got the fire going. Then I heard bullets whining off some metal objects close to me. I abandoned my fire and coffee and dove back to the protection of the tank. The Lieutenant told me to get back out there and make the coffee. That was

the first time I got to tell an officer what to do and where to go. The crew had quite a laugh at my expense.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

As we moved down to Naha on June 7 from our muddy bivouac, D-3 broke its tracks and the ammo tractor stripped its external final drive. We were met by mortar fire as we moved into the harbor area. I worked repairing tracks for two days, and that was a hell of a job. On Saturday, June 9, the 1st Platoon of D Company guarded the inner harbor, the 2d Platoon the beach, and the 3d Platoon moved out for an assignment nearer the front lines. I washed clothes on Sunday, and what a wash it was! The 3d Platoon returned late Sunday, and on Monday I worked on their tanks. With other maintenance men I moved to a maintenance area we had set up. There we piled up logs for protection against snipers, who were really raising hell that night.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

On June 7 Company A moved into Naha and spent about 24 hours there. The city was a mess, totally demolished, though it must have been a scenic place at one time. Our stay there, after driving through parts of it, must have been in a suburb in the southwestern part of the city. Our platoon was parked around some houses, some of which were still intact. "Raider" (Russell C.) Dettman and I drew water from a well and scrubbed some clothes, hanging them on bushes to dry. That day he told me he had a funny feeling and thought he was going to get hurt bad or die. He was married and was perhaps a couple of years older than I. He was the driver of his tank.

THE OROKU PENINSULA

Although most of the Japanese 32d Army had withdrawn to a new defense line near the southern tip of Okinawa, General Ushijima ordered a force of about 2,000 men to move into, and defend, the Oroku Peninsula (Oroku Hanto). These were Japanese naval personnel who had been integrated into the 32d Army after having lost their ships. On June 4, while the First Armored was aboard LSTs, the 4th Marines, supported by elements of the Third Armored Amphibian Battalion, had made a shore-to-shore landing from the Asato Gawa inlet to the northwestern tip of the Oroku Peninsula. They soon overran the Naha airport, located on the peninsula close to the western beaches, but afterward encountered stubborn resistance. It took about ten days to secure all of Oroku Peninsula. In the same period other divisions of the Tenth Army were also moving south past the former Naha-Shuri-Yonabaru line.

On June 8, the Third Armored Amphibian Battalion was again attached to the First Armored, and on the 9th, the Army's 708th Amphibian Tank Battalion was also attached. The mission of this large armored amphibian group, under Colonel Metzger's command, was to defend beaches in the 6th Marine Division's zone of action. At the time of its widest deployment, a beach line of 20,550 yards was covered by 104 am tanks.

In addition 24 amtanks were sited on the Naha Airport as a countermeasure to anticipated airborne attacks by the enemy.

Battalion headquarters in Naha in this period was the center from which companies and platoons of amtanks were deployed for beach defense or dispatched for fire missions in support of the infantry. In was also the center for maintenance work on the growing number of battle-worn vehicles.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

The First Armored line companies moved south and were once again supporting the attack with both direct and indirect artillery fire. The Japanese responded with artillery and rocket fire from Oroku Peninsula, just to the south. The rockets were crude affairs, fired from wooden troughs; they were unstable and tumbled through the air causing a weird noise. Unnerving, but causing little damage.

Along with artillery missions and beach defense, the Battalion had the mission of securing Ono Yama Island in Naha harbor and ringing the beach along the harbor to prevent Japanese troops from escaping the pincer movement executed by the 1st and 6th Marine Divisions. Years later I was to learn that the enemy force caught in the trap were naval personnel now fighting as infantry. Most of the Japanese trying to escape the land battle were gunned down in the water. With hindsight, some could probably have been taken prisoner, but mercy was not the mode of the day.

RALPH E. HAUTH, Company A

On June 8 Company A was sent south toward Naha Airport. As we moved along the beach, our tank, A-7 was blown up by a mine. We lost our driver, Russell C. Dettmann. Our radioman, Tom (Thomas C.) Deivert, and Gunnery Sergeant Danny (Daniel H.) Maynard were wounded and sent to a hospital ship. I was sent to a hospital on Okinawa and, after two weeks, sent back to the outfit. For the rest of the operation I worked with A Company's supply sergeant, William C. Bartels.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

Late in the day on June 8, we moved out of Naha to take up beach defense positions along the seawall right by the Naha airfield on Oroku Peninsula. We went along the beach in a westerly direction and then south-southwest. I believe the tide had been ebbing for some time, and we drove in a single line, partly in water and partly in wet sand. There must have been four or five tanks ahead of A-10, and "Raider" (Russell C.) Dettman was following one or two tanks behind us, but he diverted a little off to the port side. His tank hit a Jap "kettle mine," blowing the cab right off the tank, also blowing all the crew about 15 feet into the air. Raider was carried to the seawall area, where he died. The other six men were taken away to a field hospital. I don't know how badly they were hurt, but a couple of them looked pretty bad. One of the wounded men was Gunnery Sergeant Daniel H. Maynard, who had been wounded twice on Guam

and now received his third wound in eleven months. PFC Ralph E. Hauth was another of the wounded, but I cannot remember the rest. Good old Raider was from St. Louis.

DANIEL H. MAYNARD, Company A

I got through okay on Okinawa till seven days prior to the surrender, when the tank I was in hit a mine. We lost two crewmen, and the rest of us were wounded. I ended up in the hospital on Guam, and was there when the war ended.



Wreck of Amtank A-7, in which Corporal Russell C. Dettman was killed and other crewmen injured when, on June 8, 1945, the tank struck a mine. (Maynard)

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

On June 9 we moved by water about five miles to a beach south of Naha airfield, where for almost two weeks we maintained a beach defense. On the 12th Lou (Luther M.) Flattum and I walked over the Naha airfield to see the wrecked Jap bombers, fighters, and hangars.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

We dug our foxholes on the north edge of Naha airfield, where the earth sloped steeply up to start forming the seawall. There were several intact Japanese fighters and other planes on the field, about 200 yards south of us. They must have been badly dam-

aged, though, or pilots would have taken off in them. The next day, even though the 4th Marines were fighting just off the southeast edge of the field, I ran out and climbed up into a fighter there. The machine guns had been removed. I sat in the cockpit envisioning myself taking off and soaring around. That night a Jap plane circled very low around the field for 15 to 20 minutes. We wanted to shoot the machine guns at it, but the word was "No, don't fire at all; you'll give our position away."

On our second or third night at the Naha airport there was suddenly a huge flash of fire out at sea. Many seconds later the concussion reached us, so great that anyone standing was just about blown over. One of our ships had been reached by a kamikaze or by a suicide boat. We checked the water the next morning and found debris. I think we even found a life buoy or something with the ship's name on it. We did not find any bodies or body parts in the small stretch of water's edge that we searched.

It was in this area that I spotted a body floating a hundred yards or so out in the sea. I checked it out with binoculars, figured it was a Jap and, thought maybe he had a pistol or a sword. Even though the water was pretty rough, I waded out there, but a cursory exam found there was no booty.

SENAGA SHIMA

Senaga Shima is a small offshore island, 700 by 500 yards, just 500 yards from Okinawa's beaches, near the southern end of the base of the Oroku Peninsula. On June 14, two Company D platoons supported the 6th Reconnaissance Company and a company from the 29th Marines in seizing the island. An unusual feature of this operation was the role of the First Armored and the Army's 708th Amphibian Tank Battalion in the softening up process. For four days prior to the landing they expended 2,500 rounds of 75mm high explosive ammunition on Senaga Shima, at targets designated by 6th Marine Division. On June 12 and 13 the amtanks continued the process by moving into the water near the island and firing at close range.

At 0445 on June 14, at low tide, infantry and amtanks moved from the Okinawa shore to Senaga Shima. The move was made at low tide, in darkness, under an artillery smoke barrage. The infantry proceeded on foot ahead of the two platoons of D Company amtanks. Lieutenants James W. Dupree and Richard P. Greene were the platoon leaders. The amtanks traveled entirely around the island, following the infantry as they advanced on shore. The waters around Senaga Shima were heavily mined, leading to an altercation between Captain Robert E. McDowell, who was dealing with the mines, and a Division staff officer, who was urging more aggressive action. The landing on Senaga Shima turned up no enemy troops, and was the last action in the Battle for Oroku Peninsula.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

From its beach defense position B Company did participate in the capture of Senaga Shima, a small offshore island. On June 12 we drove out and shelled the island,

softening it up for a landing. We fired at 1000, 800, and 500 yards; in B-3 we fired about 40 rounds. A wrecked Jap bomber and two or three fighters were lying in the waters about the island. I missed the action on June 13, when Jack (John H.) Trapp, B.P. (Bernard P.) Simmons, James C. "Hap" Chandler and I drove B-3 into Naha to get a leaking pontoon welded. For the landing on June 14 we laid down a heavy barrage in support of the infantry, and the island was taken without opposition.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

We made another move, close to the Naha airfield. There we set up and fired considerable ammo onto Senaga Shima, a small offshore island. On the 12th we went up close and shelled the island point blank, missing a mine field we learned later by only five feet. As usual at that time we had to be alert for Jap snipers and infiltrators trying to break out through our lines to get north.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

The 1st and 2d Platoons returned to our Naha bivouac for repairs on Wednesday, June 13, then left at 1600 to rendezvous that night for making a landing the next morning on an offshore island. On Thursday, June 14, they landed without opposition, but ran into a heavy mine field. They returned to Naha at 0900, and we made repairs so they could go again.

SOUTH TO THE END

After the middle of June the Okinawa campaign moved rapidly to its conclusion. There was still hard fighting at Kunishi Ridge, Mezado Ridge, Yaezu Dake, Yuza Dake and other places of no importance now except for their history as battle sites. By June 17, however, the Japanese 32d Army no longer existed as an organized force. By the 19th, the land battle for Okinawa was effectively over, and on June 22 the island was declared secured. There were still large numbers of Japanese military holding out as individuals or small groups, determined to resist to the death.

An incident noted by First Armored men was the explosion of the destroyer, *USS Twiggs*, just outside Naha harbor when struck by a torpedo from a Japanese plane. A magazine on board blew up, she sank, and 152 sailors died.

With the Orokuni Peninsula secured, Navy ships began to move into Naha harbor, and the work of clearing the harbor and cleaning up the city began. The First Armored command post left Naha, however, moving south on June 17 to a beach a little beyond the Naha airport. The amtracs moved farther south also for beach defense, initially past the town of Itoman, and ultimately as far south as Kiyamu. The First Armored and the 708th Amphibian Tank Battalion together defended a shoreline more than ten miles long. In addition, two companies of amtracs were at all times deployed for the defense of Naha airport.-

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

On June 16 we witnessed a thunderous explosion of a destroyer about six or eight miles out to sea.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

On June 16, while on watch at night, the *USS Twiggs*, a destroyer, blew straight out from our location. Fire lit up the scene like Dante's inferno. We thought at the time that the ship had hit a mine.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

On Friday, June 15, after a Jap pocket along the estuary had been wiped out, we expected to get a little rest. We could still watch Jap air raids, but work to clean out the harbor began, and LSTs unloaded men, equipment, and supplies all day. Bulldozers worked to clean up the city. On Saturday, the 16th, a destroyer blew up outside Naha harbor, cause unknown. That day we prepared to move south again.

On Sunday, June 17, we started to move out of Naha at 0830, and set up one and a half miles south of the Naha airstrip. We had a very peaceful evening for a change, and also galley chow, the first since we returned from our two-day LST ride two weeks earlier. Six tanks and the maintenance tractor bogged down in mud and had to be pulled out the next day. We set up a beach defense when we were alerted for a counter-invasion by air and sea, but nothing happened.

BEACH DEFENSE AND A DESPERATE ENEMY

First Armored men had long experience at beach defense, but in the far south of Okinawa there was a difference. As his army collapsed, General Ushijima issued a last message to his forces to fight to the last and die for the Emperor. He directed officers to disguise themselves as Okinawan civilians and infiltrate to the north and carry on as guerrillas. The First Armored defenders on the long beaches fired on numerous enemy soldiers trying to infiltrate north on the reef. They killed others who were making night attacks—perhaps consciously suicidal—in a desperate effort to take one or more Americans with them before they themselves died. Beach defense had become a more dangerous assignment. First Armored men also saw deliberate suicides. Killing Japanese and seeing them die became a routine of daily life. The sight and stench of dead bodies on the reef and ashore also became commonplace.

Not all Japanese, however, elected to die. The number of prisoners of war taken escalated sharply as the battle drew to a close. From April 1 to June 11, the average number of prisoners per day was only four. From June 12 to 18 the average rose to 50. On June 19, 343 prisoners were taken, and on June 20 and 21 there were 997 each day. Though many native Okinawans were killed in the fighting, and others committed suicide out of fear of the Americans, many others fled north to be taken in by military government, where they could get food, medical care, and other necessities.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

The beach south of Naha airport proved to be a swell bivouac area. From an old well near the tanks we could get water for showers and washing clothes. While here we were once issued some fresh meat, three eggs per man, and some potatoes; we had to prepare them ourselves, but they were good. On June 18 Lieutenant Irwin Ronald Buckner notified me officially that I had made Corporal.

At 1200 on June 22 all of Company B moved south, driving on coral at first, then on muck. Six tanks, including B-3, bogged down and had to wait for high tide before the maintenance tractor could pull them out. We proceeded to our new position, opposite a small island about 500 yards offshore, and set up a beach defense. There were a lot of dead bodies around and the stench was rotten. Okinawa was officially declared secured on June 22, but there was still some mopping up to do. And that night there was a lot of shooting around our area; B company was credited with 28 killed and 30 taken prisoner.

On the 23d a patrol brought in civilians and two soldiers from the small offshore island; the civilians were then released, but the soldiers were taken as pows. On June 24 Lou (Luther M.) Flattum and I walked six or seven miles and saw prisoners being brought in, civilians being evacuated, and bulldozers burying the rotting bodies of soldiers and civilians. We saw a Marine helping an old woman, who looked about 80, onto a truck for evacuation.

DONALD C. HOUSTON, Company B

We were bivouacked near the southern end of Okinawa, preparing to land on an island just offshore. Because it was quite heavily wooded where we were, a defense was set up with trip wires and grenade flares. In the middle of the night we were startled awake thinking we were under attack. A goat had wandered into the area and tripped a flare.

The next morning we started for the island with infantry riding on top of our tanks. Going across to the island we saw a black object floating on the water. Someone fired at it, and it really blew. It was a floating mine. We landed unopposed, the only casualty being one badly wounded man. A boy was taken prisoner and brought back to the main island.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

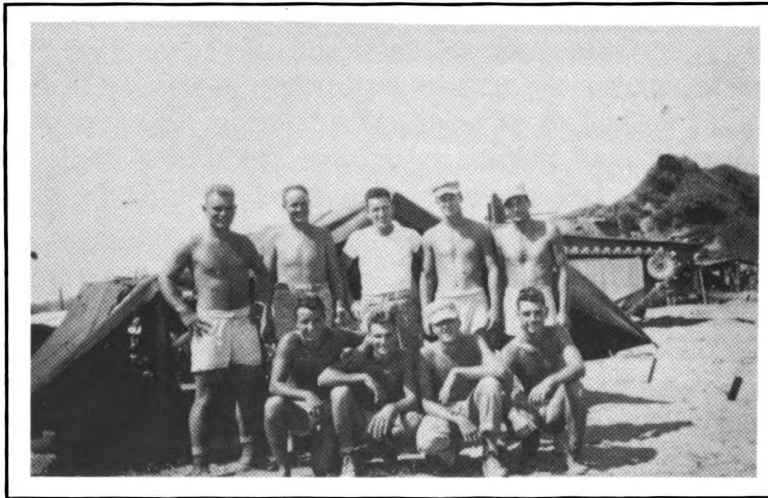
We moved south on June 22 and set up for the night between the seawall and a small offshore island. There were Nips dead and alive in the area. That night we set up two-man machine gun watches and had a lot of activity. In the morning there were 20 Japs killed and 30 prisoners taken, all believed to be the count just for our platoon. The prisoners were soldiers and civilians, men, women, and children.

WILLIS D. BOOTH, Company D

South of Naha, we set up one night on a beach with our machine guns facing out to the coral reef that the Japs were using to infiltrate north. Donald C. Swedlund and I were on watch. I had the field glasses and manned the machine gun. Swedlund asked if he could look through the glasses for a while. Pretty soon he said, "It looks like a bunch of jack rabbits out there." I grabbed the glasses, looked, and started firing the machine gun. Swedlund got excited and started firing his M-1 rifle about five inches from my ear. I threatened to kill him and could hardly hear for days.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

About June 17 or 18 we went south by water to the southern outskirts of the town of Itoman. As we approached the beach, our tank passed a Jap treading water. Normally we would have shot him, but Lieutenant Charles "Speed" Spilman told us not to.



Men of 3d Platoon, C Company in front of a tent they called home.
Back row: Harold I. Sommers, Paul K. Pierson, Paul W. Bills, Robert C. "Cork" Blaemire, Frank P. Di Julio. Front row: Michael J. Scuderi, Dan O. Eriksen, Robert W. Olsen, Franklin Bonnes. (Blaemire)

He was to be collected for interrogation by someone. A tank to our port side fished him in with a boat hook.

Putting ashore, we pulled up into our defensive positions. While others were putting up camouflage and so on, Bob (Robert W.) Pierce and I started to run phone wire. We ran 300 or 400 yards of it, and Bob then tried calling back to see if all was okay. The line was dead, so we backtracked along the seawall. We found the

line cut, not far from a group of six or seven oriental men in kimonos, standing and smoking. Bob repaired the line, and we went out again. A few minutes later we again tried to phone, but again the line was dead. We found the cut this time where the same men were standing. We figured they were Jap soldiers; they were of the age, and sullen-looking. While Bob repaired, I made menacing movements with my carbine while cussing them out royally. I was ready to drop them if they even blinked. They did not bother the wire again.

There were many civilians now heading north, away from the fighting. Most were women, old men, and young kids. We kept our eye on them, but did not bother them then or later. Nor did we provide any water or rations, which I now know they sorely needed.

For a few weeks in June we had been killing Japs, mostly in the water at night. The Japs had passed the word, we thought, that certain units were to infiltrate to the rugged north country and regroup there for guerrilla warfare. In any case, a flare would go up and we'd see them, or daylight would catch them still out in the water and in our view. Many were killed in this manner, usually alone or in groups of less than eight or nine. In the Itoman area A Company was killing an average of about 21 Japanese a day, mostly at night.

We left Itoman, going south, on June 21 and parked behind the seawall, on flat land immediately north of Mezado Ridge, the same ridge on top of which General Buckner was killed. While Bob Pierce and I were on our 2330-0230 watch, I happened to glance behind me and saw three Japs about 30 feet away. I gave the word and opened up with my carbine, shooting tracers. I sighted in on one and dropped him on my second shot. Another was shot about ten feet from the first and finished himself off with a grenade. The tank just south of us was shooting at the same time. When our watch ended, Bob and I crawled into our wide but shallow foxhole, which had a tarp draped over it, and immediately fell asleep. Somewhat later we were jolted awake by a machine gun firing a few feet away. We rolled and grabbed weapons. Tracers about three feet high were firing towards the road from three feet in front of us. Bob and I couldn't see the targets, possibly because Harry J. Broderick and Eddie Dement, on guard, had already got them. It had been another three or four Japs sneaking up, probably hoping to ultimately make it north. Bob and I resumed our sleep. The next morning we saw that one of the dead Japs was wearing USMC boots and had a U.S. razor in his pack.



Crewmen from Amtank D-18 in front of their blue tent, acquired by "moonlight requisition" from the Army: Carlton S. "Carl" Renhard, John W. "Chick" Regentz, Grant T. Wheelin, George F. Roberts. (Roberts)

Another time, south of Itoman, another crew member and I walked in a rainstorm to another platoon area south of ours. This was daytime, and it may have been Harry J. Broderick or "Beak" (Robert W.) Pierce with me. We were huddled under a tarp hung from a tank, visiting with some buddies when suddenly three Japs were seen running for some tanks about 100 feet away. They each had a big belt of explosives wrapped around their waists and were going to blow themselves and our tanks to hell and back. They were quickly shot before they could accomplish this, but one did manage to blow pieces of himself all over the landscape just short of his objective.

Another night, one of our 2d Platoon tanks was parked right beside the road. One of the crew was standing his watch by standing in the driver's or radioman's position inside the tank, with the hatch open. He suddenly saw five or six blurred shapes running down the road towards him. His story was that he was so surprised he didn't even reach for a rifle. He emptied his pistol at them, missing them all, and slammed the hatch down tight over his head. This brought a lot of laughs when related the next morning.

LAST BATTLES

In the last week of war on Okinawa, there was still fierce fighting between the Tenth Army and remnants of the shattered 32d Army, determined to resist as long as possible. First Armored guns were employed in direct fire to support the advance of the 22d Marines along the high ground west of Mezado, southward to Nagasaki. Numerous strong points, held by Japanese holdouts, engaged units of all five U.S. divisions throughout the southernmost part of Okinawa. Two areas of heaviest resistance were at General Ushijima's cave headquarters near Mabuni, and at Mezado Ridge, where the 8th Marines were opposed by a still functioning Japanese 24th Division. General Simon Bolivar Buckner, commander of the Tenth Army, visited the Mezado Ridge front on June 18, and was killed when struck by a flying coral fragment that had been dislodged by artillery fire. General Mitsuru Ushijima, the Japanese commander, committed ritual suicide in a cave on June 22.

EDWARD G. RIZKALLA, Company C

Captain William L. Eubank asked me to go on a forward observer mission with him as a CP, to carry a radio to Hill 69 to direct artillery fire. I remember very well how bad the shelling was when we got there. I could actually see the earth shaking like an earthquake. They said the 16-inch shells from our Battlewagons were falling short. While there, I saw two men carrying a man on a stretcher, while another man was running alongside of them carrying an I.V. I killed two enemy soldiers who had just been flushed out of a cave with a flamethrower. There was a lot of firepower from both sides. We left after several hours there. On the way back we came upon a man lying on the ground with a poncho over him and were told it was General Simon B. Buckner, commanding general of the Tenth Army, who had just been killed. Back at the base, I found blood on the inner part of my leg, though I didn't feel anything. Captain Eubank said I should go to sickbay, but I didn't. My parents had all three sons in the war and didn't need any telegrams.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

On 17 June I was standing with Colonel Harold C. Roberts, the commanding officer of the 22d Marines, south of the town of Itoman. A volley of mortar shells rained down on us, and I dove under a tank standing nearby. Shortly after that I could hear the buzz of bullets flying over our heads and dropped down. Roberts remained

standing, and I suggested he also "hit the deck." He remarked, "They are not shooting at us." I replied, "Well the bullets are certainly going over our heads and don't know the difference." We could see the Marines fighting their way up Mezado Ridge and the Japanese defenders running along the crest.

The 18th of June was to prove a monumental day. We were on top of Mezado ridge. The Battalion command post, the front lines, and the regimental commander, Colonel Roberts, were all on the same bit of high ground. I had taken a company commander and radio team to effect liaison so that we could support the advance by firing from the sea into caves on the reverse slope of the ridge. There were groups of Japanese troops in the immediate area. One of the radio operators killed two as they ran past our location. I joined Roberts on a knoll and told him what we could do to support his regiment. At about that time some Japanese knee mortar shells hit near us. Roberts commented to me, "Maybe I don't belong here!"

I left the area and climbed down the hill to where my jeep was located. When I got to the bottom, a Japanese gun commenced firing on some tanks and cargo LVTs parked in an open area. Armed only with a pistol I did the prudent thing, slipped under a large rock and waited for the firing to cease. The Japanese gunners were very good, hitting a lot of our vehicles. Eventually our fire was brought on the enemy, and the firing stopped.

I got in my jeep and started back to the Battalion. Just as I departed, General Simon B. Buckner, then commander of the Tenth Army, came past me in a jeep and headed for the same area that I had just left. I was tempted to warn him of the enemy gun firing in the area, but reconsidered as I thought he would object. I proceeded down the road and, within minutes, heard Lt. Colonel Robert Denig, commander of the 6th Tank Battalion, send a message in the clear that both Roberts and Buckner were dead. Roberts was killed by a sniper, Buckner by the Japanese gun that had just been firing.

PATROLS INLAND

On patrols (and sometimes unofficial explorations) away from the beach, First Armored men witnessed some of the death throes of Japanese defense as soldiers, individually or in small groups, committed suicide, made suicide assaults, or tried to escape north past American lines.

JAMES C. CHANDLER, Company B

While we were near the seawall we made several sweeps through some fields covered with a short stubble. We were spaced out about 20 to 30 feet apart walking across the field. Every once in a while a Jap would rise up on his knees and place a hand grenade against his chest. It made an awful mess. I have never really understood why a soldier should be trained to take his own life instead of trying to take the enemy. We were standing up walking slowly toward the Japs and not more than 30 yards away when they would rise up.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

On a relatively quiet day, Steve Marusky and I paired up again to go sight-seeing. We agreed this jaunt was not the smartest thing, but wanted some souvenirs. We each had a good supply of grenades and ammo. We passed through a village the Marines had just passed through. It was ugly and miserable, and death was just around the corner everywhere. There were many dead all around, stark and untouched where they had fallen, but I felt no tinge of pity or regret. Then at a turn in the road, we saw a beautiful white rabbit with a thick furry coat. He paused within forty yards of us, but I couldn't think of shooting him. If he had been a Jap I would have shot him without a second thought. As I thought of it later, the incident struck me as odd. A few years previous I wouldn't have hesitated to shoot the rabbit, but would have had chills at the thought of shooting a human.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

On the morning of June 23, the 2d Platoon took a patrol out into the area surrounding us, searching for infiltrators, snipers, and whatever abounded. I noticed that rice plants, about three feet high in a paddy, were bent. Realizing that someone had walked through there, I started following the trail. Suddenly, about six feet away, a Jap popped up yelling something in Japanese. I just about fell over backwards it startled me so, but I managed to drop him with one or two shots from my carbine. The rice plants started moving, so I shot again. Another Jap raised his head, and "Stud" (Odis A.) Guthrie, who had been tracking with me, shot him. The groaning continued, and suddenly there was a puff of smoke. Grenade! We hit the deck, or water, as the field was flooded, and the grenade exploded about eight feet away. It had not been meant for us. The wounded soldier had held it up against his throat. That poor bastard had a "thousand-stitch belt" around his waist next to his skin, the kind female relatives and friends made for soldiers to wear in battle for good luck and safe return.

In the last few weeks of the campaign, we saw many Japanese soldiers commit suicide. I recall a sugarcane field on a hillside, about 500 yards north of where I was. Marines had surrounded it, and a flamethrower was at one end of the field. Shots were being fired by both adversaries. As the flamethrower slowly walked through the cane, I could spot puffs of smoke, and often a helmet would sail up in the air. It was the Japs holding a grenade up to their chests or throats and killing themselves. In that incident twelve to fifteen must have ended it that way.

Someone in A Company captured a Japanese knee mortar with a good supply of shells for it. Most of the shells were flares. This was a good find because we often couldn't get flares fired up for us. The infantry, of course, gave first priority to their own people in shooting flares. Jap flares were a bit smaller than ours, made a sputtering sound when descending, and gave off a yellowish light duller than U.S. ones. Also, the parachute holding the flare was made of silk. Being stationary at night, we welcomed flares shot up by friend or foe, for anybody's illumination aided us. Not so riflemen, who

often had night movements to make and to whom darkness was, sometimes, a friend.

A couple of A Company men picked up Japanese Nambus, light, very deadly, Japanese machine guns. As I remember, the Nambu was fed by a magazine from the top. It had an unmistakable "voice" to it, high-pitched and very rapid-firing, a sound that all combat men who heard it would remember. Because of that, Marines who came into possession of one did not fire it at night. If one did, all ears and heads would have turned his way, and he might get a few rounds of friendly mortar or rifle fire in his direction.

In our last days on Okinawa Corporal Richard W. Mussenbrock of the 3d Platoon was killed by accident by his own men while on patrol. He was an avid souvenir hunter, having one or two swords, a pistol, a battle flag, and other items.

TO THE END

Some D Company amtank crews on June 21 and 22 were active in the final push to the southern tip of Okinawa, Ara Saki (Cape Ara). They moved south in the water, firing to support the mopping up operations of the 29th Marines as they advanced southward. Much of this support consisted of firing into, and closing, caves in the sides of cliffs facing the sea. The amtank crews witnessed a stream of civilians, and some soldiers, plodding wearily northward along the narrow beach toward military government centers. Even after the island was officially secured, B Company tanks, on June 26, worked the shores far to the south in a mop-up effort to induce civilians and soldiers to surrender, and also to neutralize caves and other potential cover for enemy holdouts.

DALE L. BARKER, Company D

June 21 was a long, busy day. I was riding in Robert M. Lytton's tank, D-10, with Captain Theodore A. Burge aboard. Supporting the infantry ashore, D Company tanks moved south by sea, edging along the rocky shoreline, putting into the beach when needed there. There were many bodies in the water over the reef.

Once, in the morning, when we were on the beach for a short time, some of us found three Okinawans who appeared to be a family group—an old man, his wife, and a daughter, perhaps in her twenties. They had sought shelter under a big rock on the beach. The daughter had been badly burned. We gave them some rations and water, but just then some shells began falling into the area, and we moved out onto the reef. When we returned a few minutes later, they were all dead. The infantry had passed along the beach and, no doubt, seeing some movement under the rock, had fired into their hiding place, or thrown a grenade into it, and pushed on.

We fired on Jap positions in cliffside caves and closed many of the caves. The D-10 crew helped clear out one small cave that was low on the cliff, near the beach. We went in with weapons ready, and saw fabric of some sort blocking our view of whatever was deeper in the cave. When someone fired into the fabric, a man behind it pulled it down and came out with hands up. There were several soldiers, some or all of them

wounded, and they surrendered quickly.

Okinawan civilians by the afternoon were streaming steadily northward along the narrow beaches, to be taken over by military government. At one point, we saw, high up on a ledge in front of a cave, a large Jap soldier race out of a cave, with someone behind him firing at him. He ran among the rocks down the steep slope to the beach and joined the civilians going north. Just then a group of soldiers appeared at the mouth of the cave, stood there briefly, and then reentered the cave. Next, we heard a loud explosion, which we assumed signaled a harakiri. We closed the cave with a few rounds.

Tank D-10, with D-7 and D-8, went to Ara Saki, the tip of the island, and then returned to camp. The next day other D Company tanks returned south to stand by.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

On 21 June, I stood on the open slope facing the cliffs at the southern tip of Okinawa. Standing in the stunted palm trees and rocks were bands of Okinawan women and children and Japanese soldiers. On our side, using loudspeakers in Okinawan and Japanese, both captives and linguists were telling them to surrender, that they would be well and honorably treated. Some tried to come toward us, but were stopped by the soldiers. Women would comb their hair and then kill themselves. Some would take a Japanese hand grenade, bang it on a rock to set off the fuse, then hold it to the chest. A little "pop" would be heard, the body would jerk and fall down. Others took their children in their arms and jumped off the cliff into the sea. So ended the battle of Okinawa.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

In a mop-up operation on June 26 the 1st Platoon of B Company moved south about three miles. There we stood opposite cliffs on the shore while someone on an amtrac with a loudspeaker urged the Nips to surrender. When no one did, we shelled the area for about half an hour. Our crew fired about 80 rounds. The infantry then moved in and proceeded to mop up, taking many prisoners. A little girl, about five years old, who had been slightly hurt in the head by shrapnel, was given first aid by a corpsman. Afterward we returned to our bivouac area.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

On June 25 our platoon moved to the southern tip of Okinawa to help in more mopping up operations. We fired from the water on Jap positions in the cliffside caves where many Japs were hiding. Later we set up in a grassy meadow behind our tanks. Then we found the field was littered with dead Japs. Many had been killed and many had committed harakiri, using hand grenades held to their bodies. I finally got myself a Jap pistol and samurai sword.

DISENGAGEMENT AND DEPARTURE

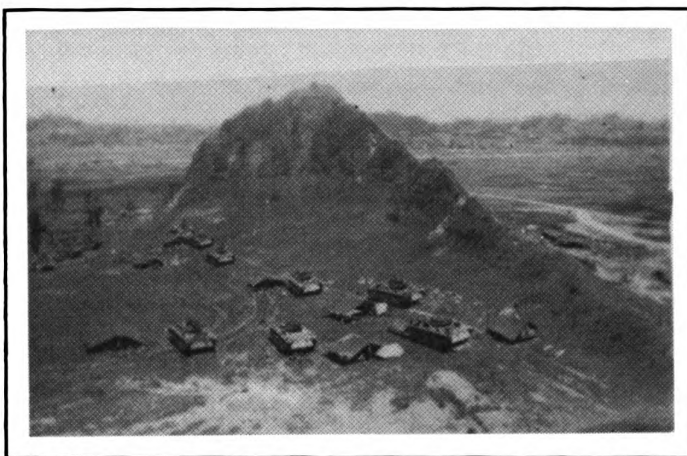
After the official end of the Battle of Okinawa, the First Armored continued to be deployed in beach defense in the 6th Marine Division zone of action. The principal activity was mopping up of pockets of resistance, sealing caves, and firing on infiltrators on the reefs or beaches. The Battalion was released from beach defense duty on June 29 and set about the business of preparing for departure. Relieved of the stresses of combat and the constant routine of standing watches, the men began to relax. Even so, there were reminders that hostile enemy stragglers—infiltrating to the north or determined to die fighting—continued to be a danger.

A major development in the history of the First Armored was the transfer of Lt. Colonel Louis Metzger, the Battalion Commander, to the 6th Marine Division. From there he went on to greater commands, served in two more wars, and eventually advanced to the rank of Lieutenant General. Major Richard C. Warga, the executive officer, succeeded to command of the Battalion. Captain William L. Eubank, commanding officer of Company C, became Battalion executive officer. Captain Theodore A. Burge, executive officer of Company D, became commanding officer of Company C.

A high casualty rate among officers led the Marine Corps to draw increasingly from the enlisted ranks for the training of junior officers. Before Okinawa was secured, three First Armored men were selected for officer candidate training. Staff Sergeant Daniel Lieberman of Company A, PFC Earl M. Hill of Company B, and Corporal Byron G. Sneva of Company C, much to their surprise, were singled out through this process, bade their comrades farewell, and left Okinawa, stateside bound.

An important part of disengagement was the repair and maintenance of amtanks and other vehicles still operable and the disposal of those so worn or damaged that they could not be salvaged. The men traveling about in that work had a good view of the military buildup, the building of roads, the stockpiling of matériel—all of these changing drastically the face of Okinawa.

On July 2 and 3, amtanks and crews were loaded onto LSTs and, on July 4, they departed Okinawa for Saipan. They had been on Okinawa 93 days, less three days afloat during the Chichi Jima interlude. Others in the Battalion embarked on the transport, *USS Admiral Capps* (APA 121) on July 6 and 7, and departed on July 8.



Company A amtanks in the last bivouac on Okinawa, June 25 to July 2, 1945. (Pierce)

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

A few days after the end of hostilities, I was ordered to the 6th Marine Division. I left the First Armored Battalion with regret after 25 months in command.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

On Wednesday, June 27, we moved into a bivouac area where, for the next few days, we could sleep with our clothes off. Even guard duty was ignored, and we even made some fudge during the day. Some tanks were disposed of.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

On June 27 B Company moved back north to the Battalion camp and began getting ready to leave Okinawa. Orders were to get rid of tanks too worn out or damaged to take with us. On June 29 "Hap" (James C.) Chandler and I drove B-3 north about 25 miles to a salvage dump near Yontan airfield. The tank had troubles and had to be pulled by an A Company tank for six or seven miles of the way. We were surprised at all the changes made in three months on Okinawa: good coral roads, even a traffic circle, Kadena airfield improved and in heavy use. Traffic was very heavy bringing in supplies such as tires, barbed wire, spare parts, rations, etc., all in quantities hard to imagine.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

We began to have time just to take it easy. On June 27 a tractor hit a mine near an island just 2000 yards from our beach. When D-9 went out for casualties, it threw a connecting rod and broke down. We had to put in a new engine. On the 28th we surveyed all but six tanks and, the next day, took the surveyed tanks to Green Beach.

ROBERT A. FISH, Company A

One day several truck loads of rice were brought in to feed the natives. I was standing there watching 90-pound women picking up the bags of rice and walking away, while the native men never offered to help. I felt sorry for those women and was helping them get the bags on their backs and shoulders. A bird colonel came along and yelled at me, "Lieutenant, don't help those women. It is customary for the women to do all the work." Sometimes I wish we had a society like that in this country.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

On Okinawa a man in the Battalion got some Japanese pornography. From the quality of the material, I assume it must have belonged to some high-ranking officer or really well-to-do civilian. It was about the shape of a roll of toilet paper, not quite that diameter, was all silk cloth, and the pornography was painted onto the silk. The colors were beautiful, and I'm sure it was quite old. The principal male characters were samurai warriors. Animals, especially turtles, were sometimes portrayed also. It was

viewed by unrolling it and making a second roll of the material already looked at. I have read about these silken rolls of pornography, and am sure it would be quite valuable today. It would be museum material.

On about July 3 all of the Battalion, except twelve men per platoon, had boarded LSTs. The rest of us were staying behind to bring up the rear on a transport. Bivouacked on a hill, we heard an explosion over in a field. I looked over and saw two Japs sneaking around some hedge at the edge of the field. William L. Aydelotte and I grabbed some weapons and, along with about twelve other guys, took after them. An H&S Company man, swarthy, Mexican-looking, wearing shorts, came walking toward us, all covered in blood. One of the Japs had thrown a grenade at him, but he wasn't seriously wounded. When we got over to the scene of action, I noticed some bushes moving. I told whoever it was to come out, and when no one did, I opened up with my carbine. The rest of the guys poured in a load of lead. In about five minutes, while some of the other guys went after one Jap, we moved up towards the bushes. I saw one Jap lying in water about two feet deep. He didn't appear to be conscious, but was moaning. I shot him through the neck to end any argument. They never did get the other one. Standing there in the water, I suddenly thought I had been shot, twice, in the upper thighs close to my crotch. When I looked, there was no blood, but three or four large wasps were buzzing around, full of fight. God, it hurt. Probably my punishment for not putting that Jap on my back and trying to find a corpsman or aid station, wherever in hell one may have been.

EARL M. HILL, Company B

One morning I was summoned to B Company headquarters. The company commander informed me that I was one of the enlisted men selected from the Battalion at that time for officer's training. I had no earlier intimation that officer candidates were being selected from the field and certainly had not submitted any application. I was dumfounded. He asked if I was willing to accept the nomination. I was and did. Sergeant Dan Lieberman of A Company was selected at the same time.

Reluctantly leaving my friends in the First Armored, I took the first available transportation to Saipan, and thence by LST to Pearl Harbor and by an escort aircraft carrier to San Francisco.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

On Saturday, June 30, we were put on two-hour notice to board ship. I went to church on Sunday and packed all my gear that afternoon. On Monday all the tanks and crews were run ragged. First we were leaving, then we weren't. We took down all tents, packed cots and personal gear, and then we didn't leave. On July 3, however, we were up at daybreak and finally went aboard LST 530 at 1000.

WILLIAM D. GERMAIN, Company A

On the way out in our tanks to board LSTs and depart, we discovered we were right over a mine field. We could look down and see them very plainly in the water. The only thing that kept us from being blown up was that we were shallow-draft and were going right over them. We reported it, and I assume they marked it so no ships would enter that area.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

In the evening of July 6 we left the bivouac area and moved down to the outskirts of Naha. Since we couldn't board ship then, we bedded down beside the road for the night. An LST pulled up to the shore next morning and we loaded onto it. Just men, no tanks, for they had gone with the first group on July 3. The LST took us out to the *USS Admiral W. L. Capps* (APA 121), a hell of a big ship, with 3000 or 4000 Marines aboard. It seemed like the whole 8th Marine Regiment was aboard. We pulled anchor at noon on July 8 and were on our way to Saipan. The chow was pretty damned good and, believe it or not, we had all the fresh water we wanted.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

In the first five days of July, parts of the Battalion, both men and tanks, were loaded onto LSTs, and had departed. On July 6 the rest of us were taken on trucks to the docks, where we bivouacked for the night. Next morning, on the 7th, we boarded an LST that took us out to APA 121, the *USS Admiral Capps*. I got meal tickets and compartment 2-3. I said good-bye to Okinawa when we left on Sunday, July 8.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

After First Armored tanks and tank crews had been loaded onto LSTs. About 200 men, including men without tanks, had to wait for over a week before we could leave. On July 6 at 1800 we were taken by 3d Armored Amphibian Battalion trucks to a bivouac in an LST landing area. We and a lot of other troops spent a hectic night, much of it fighting mosquitoes. After a 0330 reveille we marched at 0800 to the docks, boarded an LST, and waited five hours while other troops were taken aboard. The LST took us out near our transport, the *USS Admiral Capps* (APA 121). We were transferred by LCMs and LCVPs from the LST to the APA.

It was a large transport in the 25,000-ton class, the largest ship I had ever been on. Immediately after boarding on July 7 we received our meal tickets and were taken to compartment 2-3, quarters for 200 to 250 troops. We got our first cooked chow in over a month, having lived on rations for 33 consecutive days.

We got underway at about 1230 on July 8, after having been on Okinawa exactly three months and one week. I thought I would never get off of Okinawa and was glad to say *So long* to that damned rock. We had ice cream for lunch! We traveled in a convoy of about 15 ships, mostly APAs and cargo ships, with some smaller craft on the

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
WASHINGTON

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION to the

SIXTH MARINE DIVISION, REINFORCED

consisting of: The Sixth Marine Division; First Marine War Dog Platoon; Fifth Provisional Rocket Detachment; Third Platoon, First Bomb Disposal Company; Marine Observation Squadron Six; Sixth Joint Assault Signal Company; First Armored Amphibian Battalion; Fourth Amphibian Tractor Battalion; Ninth Amphibian Tractor Battalion; First Section, Second Platoon, First Bomb Disposal Company; 708th Amphibian Tank Battalion, U. S. Army; Third Armored Amphibian Battalion (less 4 platoons); 91st Chemical Mortar Company (Separate), U. S. Army; First Platoon, Company B, 713th Armored Flame-Thrower Battalion, U. S. Army,

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

"For extraordinary heroism in action against enemy Japanese forces during the assault and capture of Okinawa, April 1 to June 21, 1945. Seizing Yontan Airfield in its initial operation, the SIXTH Marine Division, Reinforced, smashed through organized resistance to capture Ishikawa Isthmus, the town of Nago and heavily fortified Motobu Peninsula in 13 days. Later committed to the southern front, units of the Division withstood overwhelming artillery and mortar barrages, repulsed furious counterattacks and staunchly pushed over the rocky terrain to reduce almost impregnable defenses and capture Sugar Loaf Hill. Turning southeast, they took the capital city of Naha and executed surprise shore-to-shore landings on Oruku Peninsula, securing the area with its prized Naha Airfield and Harbor after nine days of fierce fighting. Reentering the lines in the south, SIXTH Division Marines sought out enemy forces entrenched in a series of rocky ridges extending to the southern tip of the island, advancing relentlessly and rendering decisive support until the last remnants of enemy opposition were exterminated and the island secured. By their valor and tenacity, the officers and men of the SIXTH Marine Division, Reinforced contributed materially to the conquest of Okinawa, and their gallantry in overcoming a fanatic enemy in the face of extraordinary danger and difficulty adds new luster to Marine Corps history, and to the traditions of the United States Naval Service."

For the President,

James Forrestal

Secretary of the Navy

flanks. I spent most of the trip reading and batting the breeze, but we had General Quarters and Abandon Ship drills, one clean-up detail, and once a movie. The compartments below decks were hot and stifling. I sweated all the time.

ASSESSMENT

The Battle of Okinawa achieved the objectives set for it. Beginning before the battle was over, and continuing steadily afterward, the island was transformed into a formidable attack base for land, sea, and air operations against the enemy. Its airfields, harbors, and stocks of munitions and matériel were rapidly developed in preparation for the invasion of the Japanese homeland, scheduled for November 1945.

The cost to Americans, however, was very high. The number of ships engaged, troops landed, bombs and shells expended was greater for the Okinawa invasion than for any other Pacific operation. Published casualty statistics have not always been consistent, but the heavy toll in dead and wounded is undeniable. Approximately 13,000 were killed in action, died of wounds, or were missing in action and presumed dead. About 37,000 were wounded in action. Army casualties numbered 22,000, Marine Corps 19,000, and Navy 9700. In addition, there were 26,000 non-battle casualties. The toll of enemy air attacks on Navy ships, including those by kamikazes, was 36 ships sunk, 368 damaged, 763 aircraft lost, 4907 seamen killed or missing, and 4824 wounded.

Japanese losses were fantastic. Though accuracy in counting the enemy dead is impossible, the total number clearly exceeded 100,000. A little over 10,000 prisoners of war were taken, most of them in the last two weeks of the battle. The suffering of native Okinawans was especially tragic. Some were loyal to the Japanese, and many were coerced into service, but most were simply victims of forces beyond their control.

Including combat fatigue cases, the official Marine Corps total for all casualties was 20,808, plus 560 corpsmen and other attached Naval medical personnel. For the 6th Marine Division, to which the First Armored was attached, there were 1364 killed in action, 292 who died of wounds, 11 missing in action and presumed dead, 7429 wounded in action, and 957 combat fatigue cases.

Because the Japanese chose not to defend the beaches on L-Day, the First Armored on Okinawa suffered fewer total casualties than on Guam, and fewer men killed than on either Kwajalein or Guam. Two First Armored men were killed in action, on Okinawa, another died of wounds, and a fourth was missing in action. Thirty-nine men were wounded in action, and four were combat fatigue casualties. Both men killed in action were in A Company: Corporals Russell C. Dettman and Richard W. Mussenbrock. The man missing in action was PFC Clarence E. Hettenhausen of B Company. From the available records we have not been able to identify definitely the crewman who died of his wounds when Tank A-7 struck a mine. One recollection is that he may have been a "Pop" Haynes or Haines, a replacement believed to have joined Company A between the Guam and Okinawa operations.

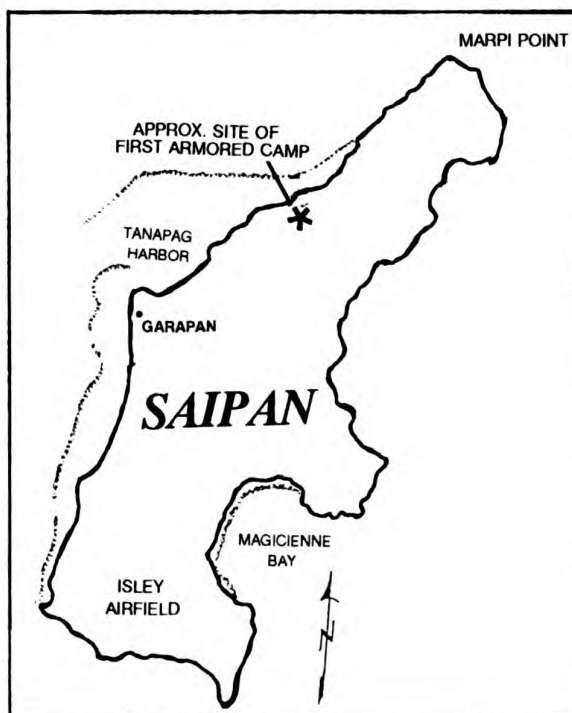
CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Saipan and War's End

The last stop overseas for the First Armored Amphibian Battalion was Saipan, the same island for which in June and July 1944 we had waited out a tense and dreary time as floating reserve. Saipan is the second largest island of the Marianas chain and lies about 70 miles north-northeast of Guam and three miles from Tinian. (See the map on page 169.) It is fourteen miles long and from two to five miles wide. Only 70 square miles in area, it is a third the size of Guam. Saipan's terrain is rugged, with its highest elevation, Mt. Topatchau, at 1551 feet above sea level.

Germany had paid Spain for rights to Saipan and other Mariana islands in 1899, but at the end of World War I, Japan was granted a League of Nations mandate over them. Japan built naval and air bases on Saipan and Tinian, from which they launched the takeover of Guam in December 1941. The chief town of Garapan, used by the Japanese as their administrative headquarters, was destroyed in the 1944 American invasion.

When the First Armored came to Saipan in August 1945, they found it transformed into a major air and naval base. The Tanapag Harbor had become an important anchorage for the Navy. The airfield which



the Japanese called Aslito had become Isley Airfield, from which the new B-29 superfortresses took off daily for bombing raids over Japan. Saipan had become home base for many diverse U.S. military units.

FROM OKINAWA TO SAIPAN

The transit of the First Armored from Okinawa to Saipan—about 1400 miles—was in general uneventful. The LST flotilla, pushing slowly along, took six days, from July 4 to 10. That was to be the First Armored's last voyage aboard LSTs. In the afternoon of the 10th, the LSTs stood off a beach north of Tanapag Harbor and discharged men and am tanks through their bow doors. Men and tanks moved ashore, where they found a tent camp waiting to be occupied. The troopship, *USS Admiral Capps*, much faster, covered the distance in a little more than three days, from July 8 to 11.

DALE L. BARKER, *Company D*

On LST 530 we had Dog Company, H&S Company, and a part of Baker Company aboard. We weighed anchor at 1100 on July 4 and left Okinawa. Six days later, at 0545 on Tuesday, July 10, the ship dropped anchor off southern Saipan. It was then we first saw B-29s in flight. At 1300 we moved to a point north of Tanapag Harbor, disembarked in our tanks, and went ashore to a new camp.

WILLIAM F. COWGILL, *Company B*

Willard V. Dietz, the gunner on B-5, had talked a dog outfit on Okinawa out of a German Shepherd that was shell-shocked and destined to be destroyed. Because of his big ears, we called him Watch. On Okinawa we hauled him around with us on B-5, but any time there was gunfire, he hid under the tank. With the captain's permission Dietz managed to bring him aboard the LST to Saipan. Aboard ship, that meant shoveling the mess from the rear gun mount and into the sea daily.

THOMAS T. OYLER, *Company C*

After the rest of the Battalion had left on LSTs, Bob (Lt. Robert V.) Denny and I remained on Okinawa with 35 other men and some equipment that wouldn't go aboard the ships allotted for our move to Saipan. Four or five days later we and the equipment left on one of the President liners. The ship was crowded, but at least some of the heavy work of the new camp construction was out of the way when we arrived on Saipan.

FRED ADDISON, *Company A*

The *USS Admiral W. L. Capps* (APA 121) arrived at Tanapag Harbor, off the former town of Garapan, about 0730 on July 11, 1945. It had taken us three days and 19 hours for the trip down from Okinawa to Saipan. We debarked at 1130, were met by First Armored trucks, and went north along the coast to our new camp.

THE CAMP ON SAIPAN

The tent camp on Saipan was strikingly different from Camp McCartney on Guadalcanal. We were still close to the sea, and still lived in tents, but the tents had wooden flooring instead of bare dirt under foot. The camp area was totally lacking in trees, a sharp contrast to the jungle setting of our old camp. It has been debated whether our camp had been previously occupied or was new and still unfinished. It had definitely not been, as some have thought, the home of the 2d Armored Amphibian Battalion before they left for Iwo Jima. Their camp had been south of Tanapag Harbor. Whatever its previous history, the camp needed additional work, and underwent considerable improvement while we were resident there. Crushed coral was brought in to pave the company streets, producing enough glare in the bright sunlight to cause eye strain. In a short time the Battalion built shower and head facilities, a galley, mess halls, special tents for offices and maintenance operations, and recreation facilities.

George Papalias, Company D

On Saipan the new camp was pretty much completed, with tents up and ready for occupancy. The tents had wooden decks and a framework arrangement that extended the tent flaps outward, giving us more room. At least the illusion was more room. But after three months of sleeping in foxholes or a tank, the tents looked like palaces to us. The company streets were paved with crushed coral, which helped keep the dust down. There weren't any trees around, a far cry from the jungles of Guadalcanal. I remember my first drink of water. I got a drink out of the lister bag and found the water somewhat salty. I said to myself, "Now, what am I going to do?" But it didn't take too long to get used to the water. Because it was so warm on Saipan, there was a supply of salt pills by the lister bags, and we were encouraged to take a pill now and then. We settled down to a comfortable life. We even had a company barber, Bobby (Robert A.) Charton. He made a good one and had clients coming from all over. As I remember the food was good, and we had a PX and post office. All the comforts of home.



A First Armored company street, coral-paved and treeless. Saipan, 1945.
(Paul)

Robert W. Pierce, Company A

In our Saipan camp the tent floors were raised and had plywood covering. This was an improvement over Camp McCartney, but there was still much work to be done. We built a new mess hall, a ball diamond, a handball court, and a movie theater. We

reworked the heads and showers. We had a barber shop at the end of the company street. It proved to be a very comfortable camp.

Stephen Marusky, Company B

Saipan had become a mighty military base, with good roads, a good anchorage for ships, and major airfields. We went directly from the APA to our new camp. It was really swell: the tents had wooden decks and were already set up, there was a nice view of high mountains, and it was near the main road. B-29s could be seen in flight on their way to bomb Japan. It sure was swell getting back to camp life. That first night I went



The First Armored beach on Saipan, 1945. (Paul)

to a stage show, *This is the Army*, and afterward I looked down from a hill and saw the ships in the harbor with all their lights on, white and red and green. There seemed to be millions and millions of lights, and from the hill it was like seeing a large city. It was an inspiring sight. We spent the first two weeks improving the camp, and all of us were building chairs and tables for our tents.

Harry Paul, Company D

Everyone was surprised to find that the tents in our new camp were up and had floors. It was a nice camp area, but without shade. In the first three weeks there was little rest, as everyone worked on improving the camp area and squaring away personal gear. I worked at building a Quonset hut for the officers' mess. Not till August 6 did we go on a half-day rest schedule.

Fred Addison, Company A

I didn't like our new home. It was so different from our base on Guadalcanal. For one thing, there were no trees, and that meant it was hot. I believe we had a couple of water faucets in each company area and, if so, we must have had a well and pump to provide pressure. Tents were already erected, with plywood floors resting on wooden supports. We started in with work parties to make improvements to the camp, which had never been completely finished. We began work as soon as we had reclaimed our seabags from the rear echelon group and moved into tents. I don't know the reasoning, but former tent mates (which were a tank crew) were separated and new groups formed. My new tent mates were Bill (William L.) Aydelotte, Billy J. Pyle, "Danny" (Thomas C.) Deivert, Elga G. Lee, Lewis G. Kreuger.

The company streets were soon covered in dazzling white coral rock. This was

obtained with much *hard* work. A truck would take a work party of about twenty of us up the island two or three miles, inland from the sea 300 or 400 yards. There we would smash coral rock with sledge hammers into the consistency of gravel. Using pickaxes we'd separate big chunks of coral from solid masses. As we pounded the coral with the hammers, small white particles and dust would fly out, and soon we would be completely covered with it. As we worked in shorts, boots and caps only, the coral on our bodies would mix with our freely flowing sweat. We'd soon be covered with a paste-like substance. It was hard work, but we sort of enjoyed it. Lieutenant Charles "Speed" Spilman was in charge of our platoon's efforts and usually had us laughing at one of his droll stories. This crushed coral would then be shoveled into a dump truck, moved to our camp, and spread out on company streets, volleyball courts, and so on.

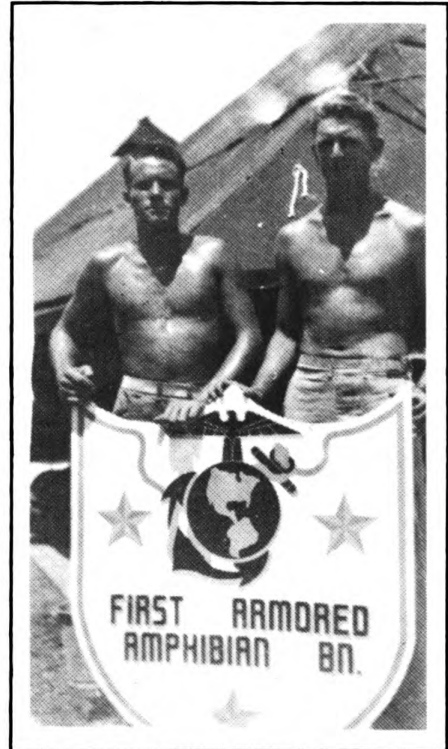
CAMP LIFE

Through the first half of August the emphasis in camp life was on construction work in completing the new camp. Special tents, Quonset huts, and other structures housed training and maintenance programs and also added to the quality of life. New facilities included a recreation hut and *three* mess halls—a general mess, a staff NCO mess, and an officers' mess. Outdoor improvements included a movie theater, a volley ball court, and even a handball court. More hours than ever before were made available for liberty, so that men had more occasion to wear khaki uniforms. Work details, guard duty, and training never ceased.

No details were ever announced, but in late July and early August Company B was ordered to prepare for a new operation. New tanks arrived, and a training schedule was begun. Whatever that action was to be, it was aborted when the war ended.

Stephen Marusky, Company B

We had liberty every weekday from 1600 to 2200 and every weekend beginning at 1200 on Saturday and all day Sunday. There were work details and Saturday inspections. I got Corporal of the Guard duty and also my usual assignment of painting signs and name plates for tents and buildings. The sign work went on till even after V-J Day. But there were also issues of beer, movies in the outdoor Battalion theater, and trips around the island. We also had a Battalion recreation hut and a Battalion chapel.



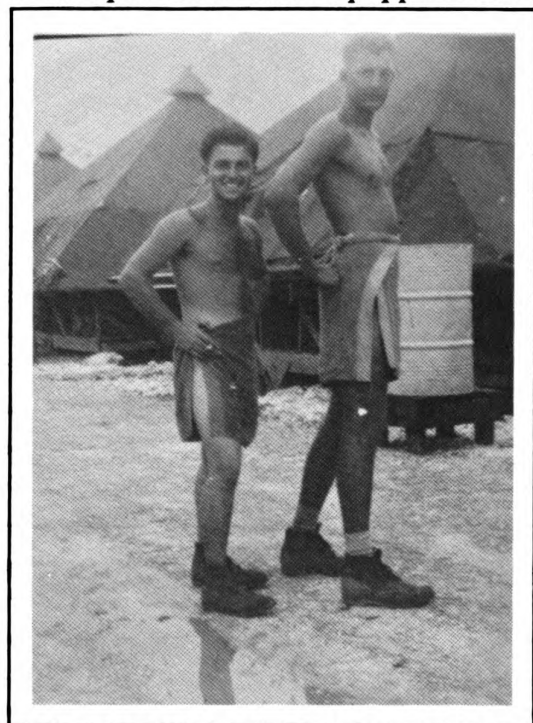
Arthur M. Cochran of Co. B and Robert G. Pierce of Co. A displaying a sign painted by Cochran for the Saipan camp. (Pierce)

George Papalias, Company D

One bad thing about our camp was that the movie theater was located right under the takeoff path of the B-29s. We would start our movie at dusk, and the B-29 squadrons would take off at the same time for their run to Japan. Needless to say, we didn't get too much of the movie audio for the first half hour or so. The same thing happened to us on Guadalcanal with the B-25s taking off for raids on Rabaul.

Dale L. Barker, Company D

George Stevens, Mayer Goldberg, John Evans, Frank Ackerman and I were able to set up a much better equipped radio repair tent than on Guadalcanal, with more work



Heading for the showers. George "Pappy" Papalias and Joe (Joseph C.) Barnbach of Co. D. Saipan, 1945. (Roberts)

bench space, a sink for cleaning solvent, racks for tools, and other conveniences. We soon discovered a startling phenomenon on our earphones. Immediately south of our Battalion camp was a powerful radio transmitting station engaged full-time in Japanese-language propaganda broadcasts to Japan. Its signal was so strong and so close to us that we could pick up the voices on a set of earphones not plugged into any equipment. When we gathered at the end of a day, waiting for the movie to start, we could hear—not loud, but plainly audible—the messages intended for Japan. Fortunately, the audio for the movie always overrode the radio signal.

Fred Addison, Company A

Periodically a plane would "crop dust" the area between the sea and the low hills to the east of us. We were the "crops" and the dust was DDT, probably to hold down flies and mosquitoes. I don't remember many flies

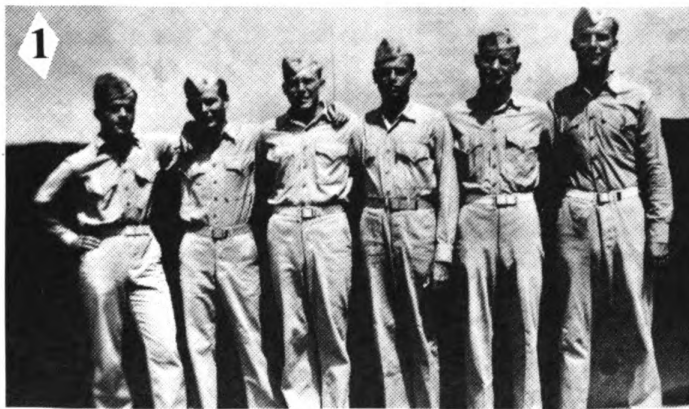
or mosquitoes on Saipan, perhaps because of the efforts of the pilot, which by rumor was Tyrone Power, a well-known movie actor of the era. Tyrone was in the USMC and was a pilot. I think I read in an island news sheet about him doing this job.

I went swimming only once in the three months or so I was on Saipan. The floor of the ocean ran a long way out without getting deep and, again, the waves coming in kept the bottom churned up so that it wasn't clear. It wasn't a fun place to swim, and we just never bothered going anywhere else.

Donald Scharf, Company D

On Saipan Don (Donald C.) Webster of C Company and I decided to build a handball court. We talked with some of the other guys to see who would be interested, and quite a few were. So we contacted the Seabees, who brought cement and lumber. We set to work with volunteer help and did a mighty fine job. When finished, the court looked so good that Don and I were soon teaching others who wanted to learn the game. The typhoon that hit Saipan on October 5 bent the handball court a little, but it withstood the storm, and the games continued.

I took off one day and hiked to the Seabee camp to get an ice cream maker, along with the ingredients. They also furnished the salt and ice to cool the container. We then took turns turning the handle while the paddles inside did the job. We produced great, lip-smacking, ice cream, the finest on Saipan. That ice cream maker went from tent to tent in the following weeks, and everyone enjoyed.

**Co. B Marines, Saipan, 1945**

- <1> Billy R. Malone, William C. Oliver, Loyd L. Brewer, Charles E. "Killer" Kirk, Charles E. Owens, Dexter S. Burnham. (Houston)
- <2> Crew of B-5—Back row: Raymond J. Quimette, Harold W. Parks, William F. Cowgill; Front row: Donald C. Houston, Willard V. "Swede" Dietz, James C. Gamble. (Houston)
- <3> James K. Steele, Grady N. Coker, William D. Brummond, Robert D. Flinn. (Coker)

Robert W. Pierce, Company A

During this time some of the Marines were making daily trips to sickbay to rid themselves of a mysterious rash which generally attacked the crotch area. Even after trying every ointment available in our sick bay arsenal, the rash grew to epidemic proportions. One of the island hospitals came up with a spray ointment, purple in color and as indelible as iodine, which was supposed to be the cure for "Japanese crud." Since about 80 percent of the Battalion had by then been infected, the whole Battalion was ordered to have their backsides sprayed in purple ointment. In a few days health was restored. I only wish I could remember the name of the colorful cure.

Donald C. Houston, Company B

After B Company "won" the draw to prepare for the next campaign, we were issued new tanks. To prepare them, of course, it was necessary to test fire the turret gun from outside the turret by means of a long lanyard. This we were all doing, firing out to sea. Just as one of the 75mm's was fired, a PBM flew in sight, taking off from the nearby air base. Believe me, there were a few tense seconds. Fortunately the plane and shell did not collide in midair.

Stephen Marusky, Company B

On July 28 some new tanks came in, and we began to spend more time in maintenance and combat training. On August 1 we all began to make camouflage nets. On August 6, however, we began to get liberty from 1300 on.

AROUND THE ISLAND

Because Battalion personnel were given more time for liberty, and Saipan was home to many diverse service units, First Armored Marines had more options for recreation than ever before. Some of these units, almost permanently established on the island, were better equipped for movies and stage shows or had well-stocked PX's. USO shows, with movie stars and other entertainers, seemed to come to Saipan more than they had on Guadalcanal. Several nearby units had chapels where First Armored men could go for religious services. A special attraction was Isley Airfield, where the huge B-29s could be seen taking off.

George Papalias, Company D

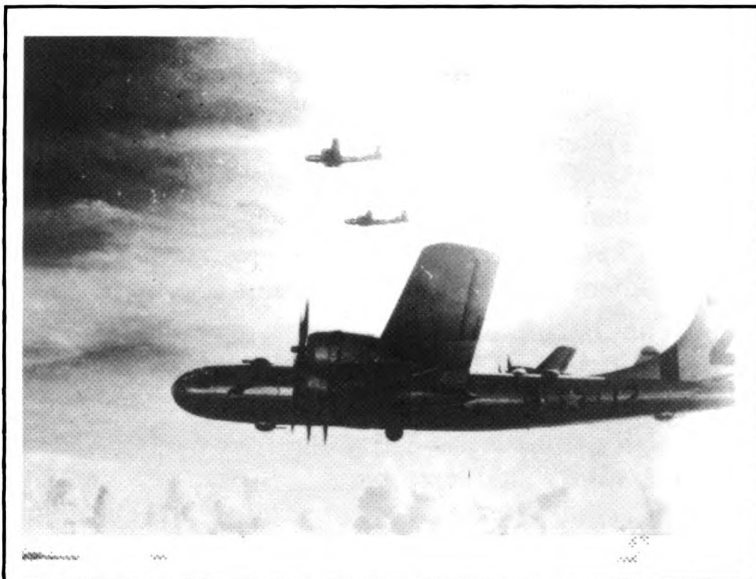
One day I went to the Army Air Corps airfield and saw my first B-29. It was a huge thing. How did it manage to take off? The B-29 in civilian life became the B-377, used on overwater routes and, in its day, a deluxe ship, with a lounge and bar in the lower deck. I noticed the runway was surfaced with crushed coral. As a result, the B-29 could make only about four landings on a set of tires. I believe it because, after being on Saipan for a few weeks, I found that my boondockers wore out faster than usual, and I am normally easy on shoes.

Another time I hiked up to the Navy Air Station and was invited to ride the rear seat of a TBF. I guess the pilot wanted to get his flying time in for the flight skins. Anyhow it was a fun ride and I got to see Saipan and surrounding water from the air.

Once Leslie Post of B Company and I walked to the Armed Forces Radio Station and looked around. Who should be there helping run the place but Dickie Moore. If you recall, Moore was an actor and used to appear in small parts, once with Shirley Temple. In fact, if I remember, he gave Shirley her first movie kiss. I asked my youngest brother, Socs, still at home, not in the Corps yet, to send me the makings of a crystal set. With it I could pick up the local AFRS station in the daytime, but at night, forget it. There was an OWI station down the beach from us broadcasting propaganda to Japan, and that station blanked everything out.

Stephen Marusky,
Company B

I went to movies and stage shows at the 2d Amphibian Tractor Battalion, the 31st and 39th Seabee Battalions, and at Clippertown. Some of the stage shows featured touring entertainment troupes with stars such as Gene Autry and Charlie Ruggles. Once when I was in charge of a trip to pick up supplies, I saw Saipan civilians working as employees in the supply dump and POWs under guard working on farms and roads.



B-29 superfortresses on a mission.

Fred Addison, Company A

There were four air bases on Saipan: Isley Field, the largest, which was Army; the other three Navy/USMC. One of these, at Tanapag, was a Navy seaplane base. There was another air base on Tinian, three miles off the southern tip of Saipan. Among other planes, the huge B-29s were stationed at Isley and also on Tinian. Dozens of these four-engined monsters, the largest planes of the era, would take off daily, assemble into formations in the sky, and head on bombing runs in Japan. The *Enola Gay*, which dropped the atom bomb on Hiroshima, was stationed on Tinian. Eddie Dement and I made several trips to the airfields and Army camps, where we would sell or trade souvenirs for money, booze, or beer.

THE END! VICTORY! PEACE!

The war ended suddenly. At the beginning of August, First Armored Marines had been training for the invasion of Japan. By the middle of the month it was all over. The news of the first atomic bomb drop on August 6 was slow to reach the public. We did not hear until August 8 that a horrendous bomb of unimaginable destructive force had been dropped on a place called Hiroshima in Japan. We learned on August 10 that a second bomb, on Nagasaki, had been dropped on August 9. Encouraged by radio news reports and by our own speculations, we were tense but hopeful that maybe the war would end. It was hard to believe, for in the experience of all American troops, the Japanese preferred death to surrender. But in the face of such devastation, it seemed possible they might accept defeat.

At midnight following August 10, we turned on all the company radio sets in the Battalion to hear reports that the Japanese wanted to surrender, provided only that the emperor be retained and his status preserved. Fantastic news! It wasn't quite the unconditional surrender demanded by the Allies, but no one in the rank and file regarded that single Japanese proviso as an obstacle. The sentiment most often heard was "Let them keep their emperor; he's like a god to them."

The Japanese surrender was announced to the Battalion at about 0910 on Wednesday, August 15, and the next day was declared a holiday to celebrate V-J Day. At that early date we had not heard, nor had any perception, of the nature and extent of the death and suffering inflicted on Japanese civilians in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Later everyone would learn about burn and radiation damage, but at that time we could only rejoice that the war was over. The air and naval bombardment of Japan, and finally the cataclysmic destruction by the atomic bombs had been decisive. The First Armored and a million other American troops would not now be called upon for a bloody invasion of Japan. Everyone was happy and relieved that we had survived the war and would soon be going home.

ROBERT W. PIERCE, Company A

The war was winding down. V-E day in Europe had been celebrated, and we listened attentively to daily radio reports of the Tokyo bombings. We had heard that as their next mission the First Armored was scheduled for a landing on the Japanese mainland and that American casualties were expected to be very high. We were glad to hear that atom bombs had been dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

On August 6, when the atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and we got the news via radio, we just could not comprehend a weapon of the magnitude described. Then when the second one was dropped, on Nagasaki, on August 9, we were ecstatic. That was because it now looked like the war could possibly end without the invasion of



VOL II NO 101

"This Is It! All The News We Love To Print!"

WEDNESDAY, 15 AUGUST 1945

IT'S OVER!

WAR ENDS AS JAPAN ACCEPTS ULTIMATUM

San Francisco, 15 Aug (ANS)—President Truman announced this morning that the Japanese Government has accepted the Allied Potsdam ultimatum and surrendered unconditionally. The second World War has ended.

At the same time, Gen Douglas MacArthur has been appointed the Supreme Allied Commander of the Occupation Forces in Japan. He will rule Japan through Emperor Hirohito as the Allied counter-demand specified in answer to the initial Japanese peace proposals.

The earliest possible moment will see the signing of the actual signing of the surrender document, probably aboard the battleship "Missouri," in honor of President Truman's native state.

Pending further confirmation of the surrender, all American troops have been ordered to cease hostilities, and Selective Service is taking immediate steps to cut inductions sharply, and only men under 26 years will be inducted.

President Truman declared there is only one way to interpret the Japanese message—unconditional surrender.



THE ARMY'S VICTORIOUS CHIEFS OF WORLD WAR II

The message was radioed to every American fighting front, and in Japanese, it was revealed to the people of Japan, although Radio Tokyo did not say anything of the actual surrender in a home broadcast. The cost of the war is almost \$300,000,000,000 so far. Casualties are more than 1,068,000 including more than 250,000 killed. The heavy

public debt probably will require continued high taxes, although Congress may insist on earlier cuts than the treasury feels would be right. A gradual easing of Government spending is in prospect, though continued high Army, Navy and relief cost will take considerable money. (Continued on page 4)

EXTRA

V-J Day Front page of The Daily Target, published at Saipan by a U.S. Army unit.

(Germain)

Japan proper, which we knew we would be involved in. Then when the cessation of hostilities, unconditional surrender, was announced on August 16, everyone went wild. God, what a great day. I think we had two or three days off to celebrate. I still have



Company A men on Saipan: Robert W. Pierce, Henry J. Broderick, Oliver T. Dowling, and Banks Pennington, plus (in khaki) a visitor. (Pierce)

waiting for news of a Japanese surrender, and on the 16th it was officially announced. It sure was a swell feeling knowing the war was over. No more enemy beaches to land on, no more assault waves, no more maneuvers, and no more invasions to worry about. The scuttlebutt was that we would be back in the States in three months, and home for Christmas.

ROBERT A. FISH, H&S Company

On the day the Japanese surrendered we celebrated. That was a lucky thing for the Battalion, for if we had had to land on the beaches of Japan, it would have been tough going.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

Early in August Company B was getting new tanks in preparation for a new offensive operation. Right after that, however, on August 8, we heard about the first A-bomb. We waited through the next week till the announcement of the surrender came on the 15th. I first heard the news at 0910 while working at the officers' club putting in bar stools. I thought then that everyone should be joyous, but there wasn't much sign of it. Everyone was thinking of what was to come next. We had holiday schedule the next day, and an issue of three cans of beer, but some of the boys were really celebrating on something stronger.

WILLIAM D. GERMAIN, Company A

We were in the field on Saipan training for artillery etc. when we heard the war was over. We threw our gun sights into the bottom of the tanks and returned to camp.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

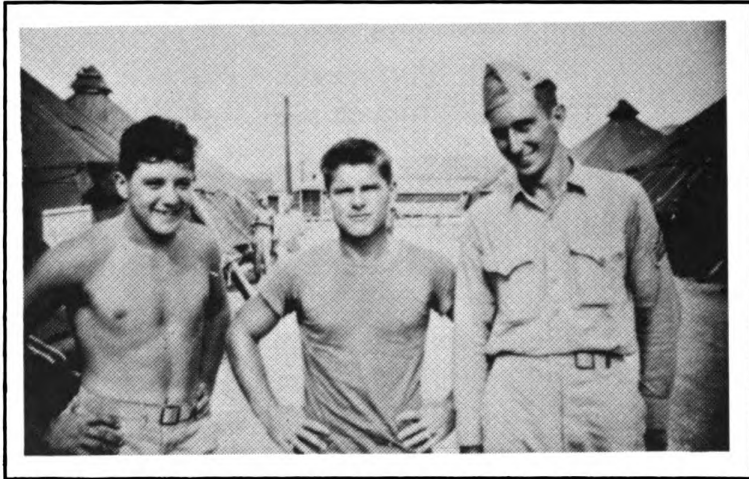
After August 8 we were hoping and

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

About a month after we arrived on Saipan we heard the news of the A-bomb drop on Hiroshima. We didn't believe it. Impossible! Never heard of such a thing! One bomb doing that much damage??? Then a couple of days later we heard about the Nagasaki drop. We started to believe it. About midnight of the Nagasaki drop I was awakened by a lot of loud murmuring out in the company street. I was wide awake by then and heard the news that Japan wanted to surrender. It was too good to be true. After I got over the shock of the wonderful news, I thanked God that I had survived the war, and without a scratch. On the historic date of 15 August 1945 the Empire of Japan surrendered. The following day we had the day off to celebrate V-J Day.

POSTWAR SAIPAN

Life on Saipan did not change suddenly after V-J Day. The camp still had to be operated, with the usual mess duty, guard duty, inspections, and paper work. The am tanks, radios, and other equipment were still maintained. Training exercises went on for another six weeks, though primarily just to keep the men occupied. Too much idle time leads to boredom and sagging morale. In the same spirit, recreation and sports activities were scheduled, and also classes in artillery, communications, and other specialties. An innovation was to hold classes designed for adjustment to civilian life. Companies and platoons took organized hikes mainly for exercise.



Company A Marines on Saipan: Junior A. Howell, William J. La Ferriere, and Francis S. McCormick. (Addison)

More time was allowed for liberty, and there was more entertainment on the island. An unprecedented event occurred in the week between the bomb drops and the Japanese surrender. Movie stars Peggy Ryan and Eddie Bracken visited the First Armored camp area, and on Monday, August 13, Peggy Ryan had lunch in the general mess hall. Movies, stage shows, religious services, the airfields, the PX's, the POW camp, the beaches, and the hills all drew the attention of First Armored Marines. A few tried their hand at boating in the waters offshore from the camp.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

USO shows came to Saipan, and my buddies and I went to three or four of them. One was Bob Crosby and his band, the Bobcats. They were all in the Corps. Another was Gene Autry, the "singing cowboy." Gene got very angry when some heckler kept

asking Gene, "Hey, where's Trigger?" Trigger was the horse of Roy Rogers, Gene's arch-rival.



Haircuts were a necessity to pass inspections. Co. D's barber was Robert A. Charton. (Barker)

Even though the war was now over, life had to continue. There were still work parties, guard detail, mess duty, etc. At company muster, after the morning chow, the daily work parties were assigned. Every so often, if we didn't overdo it, we could do a bit of malingering by reporting to sick bay with "stomach ache" or "backache" or getting our jungle rot daubed with medicine. This *might*

get the man out of the hard work and *maybe*, when he reported back from sick bay, get him assigned to some easy task such as policing up the heads. After completing a job like that, all you had to do for the balance of the morning was to avoid the platoon sergeant or the NCO assigning details.

It was on Saipan that I saw my first black Marines, at a Marine Corps supply depot a mile or so north of our camp. They had been in action on many other Pacific islands for two or three years, but there weren't many of them, and we just hadn't seen them, or even heard about their existence, until we came to Saipan.

We had two or three invigorating Company marches while on the island. On one of them, as we were going up a long incline, I saw some banana plants off to the side. I went back and whacked off a good-sized bunch of bananas and carried them back to camp with me. Another time I went out on my own to some lime trees I had observed along the trail on an earlier hike. In my ignorance I thought that whiskey, Coca-Cola, and limes would be delicious. Well, it wasn't then, and sounds even worse to me now, having been a bourbon and water man for decades now.

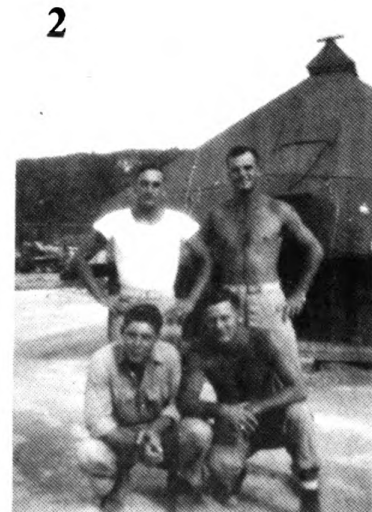
HARRY PAUL, Company D

We had movies, beer issues, and weekend trips about the island and, of course, inspections, field days, work details, and guard duty. The worst days were when there was nothing to do, especially after the surrender. I sometimes did tank work just to be doing something. On several days we went on 10- or 15-mile company hikes, probably for the same reason. Several troupes of actors came to Saipan, and we saw more stage shows than anytime since leaving the States. Movie stars, Peggy Ryan and Eddie

Bracken, visited our camp in the middle of August. In late September and early October, William J. Wigand and I worked on a motorboat he had acquired, and finally got it so it ran pretty well.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

One evening when I had returned from a movie, I was in for a big surprise. My brother Thike, who had been in on the Palau campaign and was still stationed there, hitched a ride to Saipan to visit me. Boy! What a happy day. I don't know how he got the priority to fly, but he told me he was given a higher priority than a chaplain and a major, both of whom had been left behind. Perhaps the top brass have a heart after all. Thike stayed with me for a couple of days. When it was time to get back to the airfield



Co. C Marines, Saipan

- <1> Edward J. Schultz, Robert E. Kermode, Howard H. Andrews, Milton E. "Shorty" Wirth. (Blaemire)
 <2> Back row: Frank P. Di Julio, Arthur G. Parkhurst; Front row: Glen E. "Lefty" Cleveland, Robert C. "Cork" Blaemire. All of 3d Platoon. (Blaemire)
 <3> Forest F. "Chick" Cutright, Harsh Pat Wallace. (Cutright)

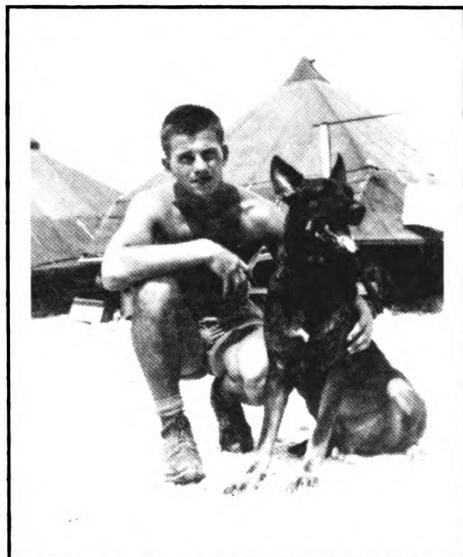
for his flight, Captain Bob (Robert E.) McDowell was generous enough to loan me his jeep for the transportation.

STEPHENS MARUSKY, Company B

We continued our training schedules through most of September, but more and more our activities were organized sports, company hikes, and by October we were getting lectures on the G.I. Bill of Rights and life insurance.

ROBERT A. FISH, H&S Company

After the surrender, we would load up a jeep every afternoon at 1400 and head for the "slop chute." As I remember, Ed (Lt. Edward M.) Dooley, Doc (Lt. Ellis M.) Livingston, Bill (Capt. William F.) Wilson, Buck (Lt. Irwin R.) Buckner, and I were regular members of this convoy.



Willard V. Dietz of Co. B and his K-9 dog, Watch, acquired on Okinawa. Saipan, 1945. (Houston)

Lieutenant Gerard Alexander and I bought a sailboat from a native for \$100. I didn't know a damned thing about sailing, but Alexander, who was from Long Island, said he was an expert. We put the boat in the water by Tanapag harbor and sailed up the coast just outside the reefs. Pretty soon the wind started blowing about 20 knots and pushed us into the reef. The centerboard got stuck in the reef, and the wind tipped us over. We waded ashore from the edge of the reef. I never saw the sailboat again.

WILLIAM F. COWGILL, Company B

Willard V. Dietz's dog, Watch, that he had got on Okinawa, was a bit of a problem on Saipan since he had been trained to attack on command or to go for anyone pointing a gun in his direction. One of Dietz's favorite pastimes on Saipan was to put Watch on a leash and sic him on Lou (Luther M.) Flattum all through our tent camp. Lou was the radio operator for B-3. Dietz was allowed to take his dog to the States with him. Watch lived a good life up in North Dakota and died at a ripe old age.

DONALD SCHARF, Company D

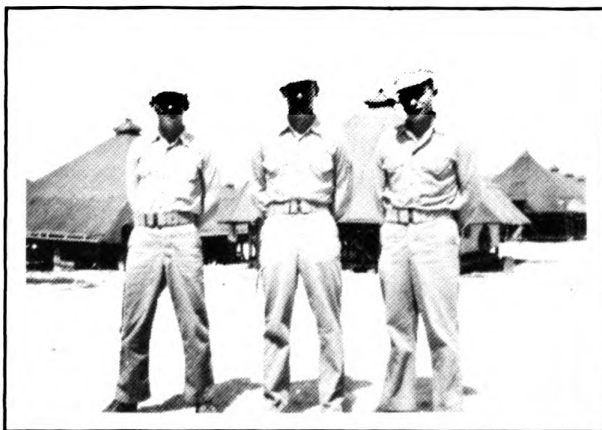
Captain (Theodore A.) Burge came to our tent one day on Saipan to tell me that I was to report to H&S Company the next day and to wear clean dungarees and spiff up. At H&S I was surprised to be informed that I had been chosen for OCS (Officer Candidate School). That made me feel good.

THE TYPHOON

On October 5 Saipan was racked by a typhoon strong enough to result in deaths and property destruction. In the First Armored camp several tents, the mess hall, and the movie area were damaged, and the guard station was blown away. The worst damage, however, was to the Battalion recreation building, thrown by the storm into the ocean. PFC John L. Witherspoon of Company A, working inside, was killed.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

On October 5 a bad storm caused much damage as high winds and rain swept over the island. Our recreation hut (a large Quonset hut) was taken up by a twister and completely wrecked, and one man inside was killed. Six others were injured when their tent blew away. The guard tent was swept away like so much kindling, but luckily no one was in it. Some of us sat in our tanks till the storm died down at about 1500.



Together from Dunedin to Saipan. H&S men, all graduates of Dunedin: Richard "Al" Vogel, Norman J. Hogan, Sophus J. Peterson. Saipan, 1945 (Vogel)

DONALD C. HOUSTON, Company B

An amusing incident occurred at the time we were hit by the edge of the typhoon. As the winds approached their maximum strength, the guard at our main gate started out of his little shelter to check an incoming jeep. The minute he stepped out, the wind blew the shelter away. At about that time we were all ordered to go sit out the storm in the tanks.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

On Friday, October 5, a typhoon swept through the island. We had prior warning and were ordered to get into one of the caves in the camp area or underneath the tanks in our tank park. My buddies and I chose the latter place. It was a very strong storm, accompanied by torrential rain, and lasted from early morning to about noon. It ripped up tents and threw our Battalion "rec" building, a metal Quonset hut, into the ocean. PFC John L. Witherspoon was inside the hut for some reason and was killed. I heard that a total of 57 men on Saipan were killed in that storm. We buried him in the 27th Army Division cemetery on the island. I wonder now why he wasn't buried in a USMC cemetery. We wore khaki uniforms, and had a firing squad as honor guard, of course, and the full works. Something occurred going into and out of the cemetery that impressed me greatly. A small Japanese POW work party was there, and each time we passed it, the Jap NCO in charge of the party called it to attention. They held this stiff

military position until we had passed and their NCO discharged it. This was courtesy and respect on their part, and I doubt they were treated any better or worse because of it. If I could have had any influence, I would have taken it into consideration for added favors. We had a beer party upon our return to camp.

THE POINT SYSTEM

Even in August 1945, soon after V-J day, a system of priorities was announced specifying the order in which men would be returned to the States for discharge. Called the point system, credit was allowed for length of service, time overseas, battle stars, decorations, and the number of dependent children. Marines with 85 points were the first to go. On August 30, a few First Armored Marines—veterans of the Guadalcanal campaign and some other old-timers—left for stateside. In late September a larger number, with 75 points, departed. Most of the Battalion, however—even those who had been with the First Armored since its activation—felt the critical number was taking a long time to come up. Points and the availability of shipping were uppermost in everyone's mind. A comical "Memorandum No. 67" was widely circulated at about that time as a broad satire on the point system. Meanwhile time was spent maintaining the camp, taking official hikes, writing letters, going to movies, engaging in various recreations, and scouting out the island. Eventually the point system was liberalized faster than ships could be made available for transporting men to the States.

<p>Morning Worship</p> <p>16 September, 1945 ORDER OF WORSHIP</p> <p>PRELUDE</p> <p>CALL TO WORSHIP</p> <p>*INVOCATION . . . Praise God from whom all blessings flow: Praise Him all creatures here below: Praise Him above, ye heavenly hosts: Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!</p> <p>*INVOCATION . . . (Closed by praying the Lord's Prayer.)</p> <p>HYMN Sweet Hour of Prayer #94.</p> <p>RESPONSIVE READING--The Holy Name--Selection #22.</p> <p>HYMN Take the Name of Jesus with You . . . #138.</p> <p>SCRIPTURE LESSON Psalm 46.</p> <p>HYMN Be Still, My Soul #110.</p> <p>SERMON <u>BE STILL AND KNOW</u> Chaplain W. W. Paris</p> <p>*HYMN Eternal Father #128</p> <p>*BENEDICTION</p> <p>POSTLUDE Pvt Ruffin.</p> <p>* - Congregation Standing</p> <p>Pvt. I. Ruffin, Organist PFC H L Coffey, Assistant to the Chaplain</p>	<p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p><u>ANNOUNCEMENTS</u></p> <p>The Bible Study Group meets in the Battalion Chapel every Thursday at 1800. The Group is studying the Book of Psalms. This week we study Psalms 74 and 84. You are cordially invited to attend.</p> <p>We have a few copies of the Whole Bible, and if there are those of you who wish a copy, you may secure it at the Chapel--Library building. There are also copies of the New Testament with Psalms available at the same place for those who desire them.</p> <p>We wish to express our thanks to Corporal James Bell of the 39th Marine Depot Company and Corporal Lloyd Drennen of the M&S Company for their help in preparing this bulletin each week. It is Bell who does the typing, and Drennen runs them off on the mimeograph.</p> <p><u>A PRAYER</u></p> <p>"O God, the Light of every heart that sees Thee, the life of every soul that loves Thee, the Strength of every mind that seeks Thee, grant me the joy of my heart: take it all to Thyself, and therein abide. The house of my soul is, I confess, too narrow for Thee; do Thou enlarge it, that Thou mayest enter in; it is ruinous, but do Thou repair it. It has that within which must offend Thine eyes: I confess and know it; but whose help shall I implore in cleansing it but Thine alone? To Thee, therefore, I cry urgently, begging that Thou wilt cleanse me from my secret faults, and keep Thy servant from presumptuous sin, that they never get dominion over me. Amen.</p> <p>St. Augustine</p>
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Some men attended religious services. Jewish, Catholic and Protestant services were available on Saipan at nearby units. (Houston)

HEADQUARTERS
FLEET MARINE FORCE, PACIFIC
C/O FLEET POST OFFICE, SAN FRANCISCO

13 JUNE, 1945

RESTRICTED

Fleet Marine Force, Pacific
Memorandum No. 67 1945

Subject: Point System, Discharge Thereof.

1. Enlisted personnel desiring discharge may apply for same only under the conditions set forth herewith.

- (A) Said applicant must have a total of 100 points or more in order to qualify for discharge.
- (B) The application must be accomplished by the enforcing signatures of the Commander-in-Chief, all members of Congress, said applicant's Commanding General, his wife, mother-in-law, and all legitimate children.

2. The aforementioned point system will be computed according to the following schedule.

- (A) One (1) point for each period of enlistment performed overseas (four year enlistment).
- (B) One (1) point for each participation in five (5) major campaigns.
- (C) One (1) point for each Purple Heart Medal received.
- (D) One (1) point for each group of (10) children.
- (E) One (1) point for each lady friend. (U.S. citizens only.)
- (F) One (1) point may be awarded for participation in any of the following-named engagements: 1. Boxer Rebellion. 2. Spanish-American War. 3. Battle of Bull Run. 4. Boston Tea Party. 5. Engagement with the Tripoli pirates.

3. Deceased persons may apply only in the event that proof is offered to the effect that the party in question has no special aptitude that can be utilized by the Marine Corps. (any violation of this ruling will result in immediate court-martial of the applicant.)

4. Any member of the Corps who lost all his extremities due to enemy action will be taken into consideration under certain extenuating circumstances. However, due to the laxity shown in this case, the applicant will be passed on by a special Board of Review to be set immediately upon the completion of the present conflict with the enemy.

5. Also in order to comply, the applicant must have at least thirty-two (2) teeth have been awarded at least four (4) Good Conduct Medals, and carry the Order of the Bath and 2 the Congressional Order of Buffalo. Then if his Commanding General sees fit to dispense with his services, he may upon request file his application.

NOTE: Any applicant who has been to sick-bay within the past twenty-five years automatically becomes disqualified unless his ailment was serious enough to cause his demise.

BY ORDER OF LIEUTENANT-GENERAL QUIGLEY W. LISH.

J. QUACKENBUSH
COLONEL, U. S. MARINE CORPS RES.
ASSISTANT DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF

"Memorandum No. 67" satirizing the official point system. (Conrad)

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

A point system was established to determine who would return home first. During the waiting period, which was long, there were recreation activities, sports, movies, etc. Shipping was probably the biggest bottleneck. We couldn't get enough ships soon enough to get the men back to stateside.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

We knew we would be going home in the not-so-distant future. There was a point system based on X number of points for time in service, X points for time overseas, and X points for battles participated in. There may have been other criteria also. Some of our old salts, I believe, started leaving in late September or early October. We were mad as hell at men back in the States who were discharged without ever going overseas or ever being in a fight.

LAST DAYS, AND DEPARTURE

By late September the critical score had been lowered to 70 points, qualifying for demobilization practically all men who had been with the First Armored since its activa-



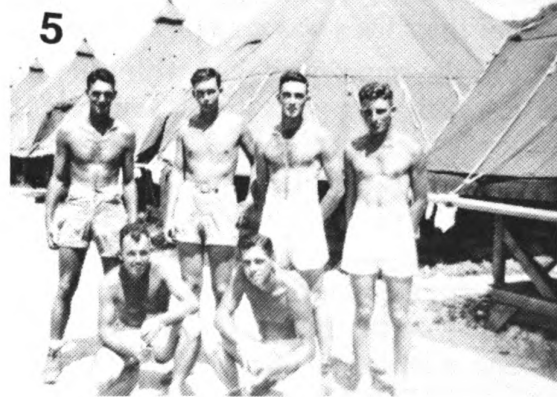
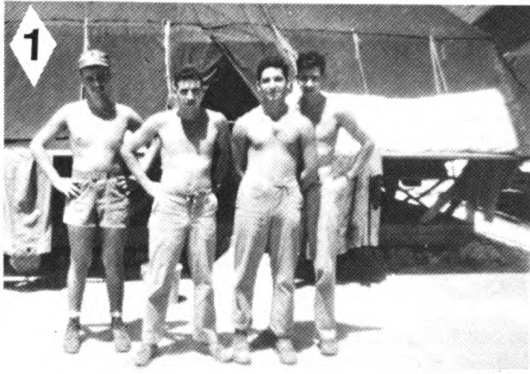
In the last tank park. Roger I. Brooks of Co. D and an amtank scheduled for survey. Saipan, 1945. (Paul)

tion—and quite a few others who had also seen service in other units. But we still had over a month to wait before there would be a ship.

The First Armored Amphibian Battalion began dismantling itself. Early in October communications gear, and then the amtanks, were turned over to service units for survey. That was the last most men in the Battalion

ever saw of amtanks, those unwieldy amphibian monsters in which for so long they had ridden, fought, and—sometimes—even lived. In addition, the low-pointers of the Battalion, who would not be going home, were transferred from the line companies to the H&S area, from which they were eventually transferred to other units. Some of those men later saw duty in Japan.

Finally, on November 2, 1945, all homeward-bound men boarded the troop ship, *USS Griggs*, and left the island. By one calculation the Battalion's total time on Saipan was 114 days.



Co. D Marines, Saipan, 1945

- <1> Radio maintenance men: Frank W. Ackerman, George S. Stevens, Mayer S. Goldberg, John T. Evans. (Paul)
- <2> Back row: Harry Willis, Ralph H. Taber, Harry L. Paul. Front row: Robert C. Otto, William J. Wigand. (Moir)
- <3> Joseph H. Basich, George E. Lincoln, Bill E. Simpson, Ross E. Siddoway. (Simpson)
- <4> Robert C. Otto, Harold Greenblatt. (Otto)
- <5> D-14 crew—Back row: Leo F. Nolan, Albert E. Powers, William C. Moir, Harold K. Miller. Front row: Clarence O. Haselden, Richard W. Smith. (Moir)

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

Early in October B Company was split, and those with low points, who wouldn't be sent home yet, were transferred to another area. The rest of us thought we would go home in a couple of days, but we had to stand by, waiting for shipping, till the end of October. In this time everyone was putting emblems and names on seabags. We still had working parties, organized sports, and guard duty and in the evenings going to movies or other shows. Finally on November 1 we handed in our seabags, and on the 2d boarded the *USS Griggs* at 0930.

DALE L. BARKER, Company D

Contrary to regulations, some First Armored men had kept diaries and taken pictures throughout their time overseas. On Saipan, with the war over and no more prohibitions against cameras, there was a flurry of picture-taking. Some men also began to make lists of their buddies in their squads, platoons, or companies and to keep souvenirs, not of combat, but of their lives in camp. All this was probably in realization that this phase of their lives was coming to an end.

In the same spirit, and with little to do in that long October, I put together lists of dates, men, and places, with very brief descriptions of events. Having access to the D Company office typewriter, which was not very busy then, I typed all this up on about 24 pages and called it a chronology. Back in the States, this document sat in a foot locker for 46 years until I attended a Battalion reunion in Tampa in 1991. For that reunion I smoothed up the descriptions a bit, made copies, and distributed them to D Company men there. That got me in trouble, for at the same reunion a sentiment was expressed that the First Armored should publish a history. Because of my chronology, someone nominated me to get that done. I demurred at the time, but at the next reunion, in 1991, I became the reluctant editor and compiler of this present volume.

Someone posted on the D Company bulletin board a map showing the projected operation CORONET for the invasion of Japan. If that was any indication, the First Armored was scheduled for the invasion of Honshu on March 1, 1946.

Captain Robert E. McDowell, the D Company commander, made a trip to Guam from October 15 to 18, and returned to say there would be more waiting before we departed.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

Rumors had us leaving Saipan for home on October 11, but this day arrived and passed, and we were still waiting for a ship. On October 24 we signed papers discontinuing our purchase of war bonds. On October 25 we lined up and signed papers which were our applications for discharge. On October 29 we learned that we had been assigned a ship, the *USS Griggs* (APA 110), and might depart on October 31 or soon after. On November 2 the majority of the Battalion, including me, boarded ship, and we started home.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

Beginning about October 4, scuttlebutt was flying that we would soon leave Saipan for the States. A lot of real preparation—packing up and surveying equipment—also began. Mostly, however, we waited around impatiently while nothing happened except the usual camp routine. On October 25, in preparation for civilian life, we had a talk on the GI Bill of Rights. On October 30 we were given solid information about leaving, and on Friday, November 2, we had reveille at 0445, left camp at 1000, and boarded the *USS Griggs* at 1030. We left Saipan Pier 3 at 1600.

<p>COMPANY "B"</p> <p>FIRST ARMORED AMPHIBIAN BATTALION</p> <p>FLEET MARINE FORCE, PACIFIC, % FLEET POST OFFICE</p> <p>SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA</p>	
<p>23 September, 1945</p>	
<p><u>GUARD DETAIL FOR MONDAY 24 SEPTEMBER, 1945 (Port Watch)</u></p>	
<p><u>OFFICER OF THE DAY</u></p> <p>1stLt. BUCKNER, Irwin R.</p>	
<p><u>SERGEANT OF THE GUARD</u></p> <p>Sgt. HOUSTON, Donald C.</p>	
<p><u>CORPORALS OF THE GUARD</u></p> <p>Corp. NORTON, Robert J.</p> <p>Corp. PATE, Thomas S.</p> <p>Corp. ROBERTSON, "J" "D"</p>	
<p><u>POST #1</u></p> <p>PFC. FLINN, Robert D.</p> <p>PFC. PERKINS, Charles E.</p> <p>PFC. MALONE, Billy R.</p>	<p><u>POSTS #2 & 3</u></p> <p>PFC. JACKSON, Dallas E.</p> <p>Pvt. FLATTUM, Luther M.</p> <p>PFC. LEWIS, Calvin W.</p>
<p><u>SUPERNUMERARIES</u></p> <p>PFC. REISIG, Clarence E.</p> <p>PFC. HISLOP, MAYNARD W.</p> <p>PFC. DYER, James E.</p>	
<p>JOHN D. BREHM</p> <p>1stSgt, USMC</p>	

Guard roster for what Don Houston reports was his last guard mount. Guard duty and other routines, however, continued for more than a month longer.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The Journey Home

The aspiration of all who were eligible for discharge was to go home and become a civilian again as soon as possible. No one was daunted by the prospect of a long sea voyage, followed by a long train trip. The rigors of travel on crowded troopships and crowded troop trains seemed like good duty compared with past experience. A few traveled by other transport and at different times, but most First Armored Marines returned to the States on the *USS Griggs* (APA 110), a very large, but heavily overloaded, troopship.

TO SAN DIEGO ON THE GRIGGS

The *Griggs* sailed from Saipan on November 2, 1945, and arrived in San Diego on November 15, covering an announced distance of 5974 miles (5245 nautical miles). When the ship crossed the International Date Line on November 8, many First Armored Marines regained a day they had lost back in January 1944; the ship observed two Thursdays, November 8.

With 1900 troops aboard, the ship was crowded. Besides the First Armored, there were men from the 2d Amtrac Battalion and the 17th and 18th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalions. Chow lines were long and were controlled by a ticket system. The ship served a special holiday dinner on November 10 to celebrate the 170th birthday of the Marine Corps. As the *Griggs* traveled eastward, it also moved north about 19 degrees. The weather rapidly became cooler, and soon the men were dressing fully and wearing jackets.

Stephen Marusky, Company B

As we left Saipan in the afternoon of November 2 on the *USS Griggs*, I watched the island fade in the distance. The ship, with 1900 troops aboard, was a little crowded. Everybody had a meal ticket, white, red, or yellow, and the whites got to eat first one day, red the next, alternating accordingly. Morning chow was at 0630 and the lines were long, but moved fast. Every day, after the living compartments were inspected, we had to stay out of them. We idled away the time reading or talking on deck topside or standing in the corridors. I got guard duty once.

Every day loudspeakers gave us the news and told how far we had come and how far it was to San Diego. The farther we went the cooler the weather got, and soon everyone was wearing jackets. Crossing the International Date Line we got two November 8's. On November 10 we had a turkey dinner to celebrate the Marine Corps' 170th birthday.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

We boarded the *USS Griggs* on 2 November 1945. What a happy day! The ship was so crowded we had to stand at tables to eat, but we didn't care. We were going home. Once at sea we started heading east, and it started to get cooler. I began to lose my tan almost immediately.

The *Griggs* was a large Personnel Attack transport, and I remember the motto of the ship: "If it doesn't move, paint it." It seemed there was paint chipping and painting going on all of the time. It was so crowded below decks it was difficult to get any sleep. Jack (John T.) Evans and I decided we would try bunking on a weather deck. We found a spot and settled down for the night, but guess what? It started to rain, so down below we went.

Not having any laundry facilities available to us, we washed clothes the way we always had aboard ship. No strain, no pain. One got a rope, tied the clothing, threw it overboard, but hung onto the free end of the rope. It wouldn't be too long before we had ocean-clean clothing. One time I forgot my load and left it out for hours. When I pulled it in, it was practically rags.

DONALD C. HOUSTON, Company B

Aboard ship on the crossing back to the States, things were, to say the least, crowded. As I recall the *USS Griggs* had 1900 troops aboard with accommodations for 1400. Having been put in charge of a seabag detail, I was one of the last to come aboard, and by that time all the accommodations below were full. So I sacked out on deck. It was so hot in the troop compartments, however, that after the first night aboard, a lot of others abandoned the quarters below and also moved topside. It being November, I knew it would get a lot colder as we progressed further north and east. So, in spite of the heat, I moved below. Believe me, later in the cruise everyone else was also heading down where it was warmer.

GEORGE F. ROBERTS, Company D

While *en route* to the USA the mess helped us celebrate the Marine Corps anniversary with a very nice dinner aboard. Everyone going through the chow line got to see that big birthday cake all decorated up, but after we had all gone through, the cake was whisked off to the wardroom.

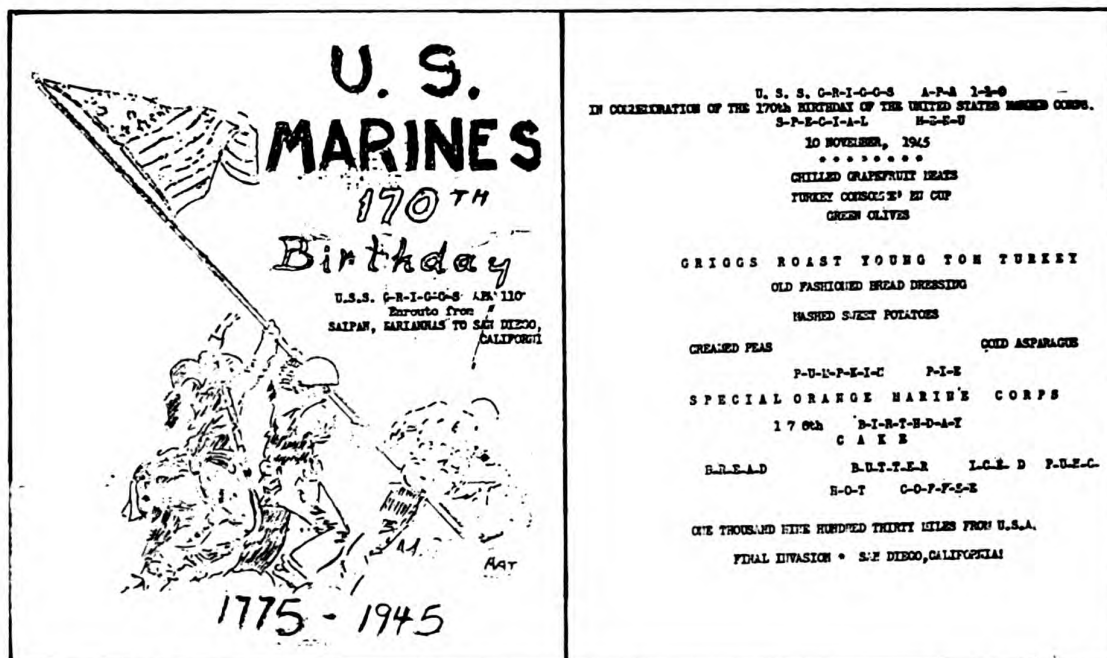
FRED ADDISON, Company A

The *USS Griggs* was very crowded with troops. It was strange, but the ship was still observing strict blackout procedures at night even though the war had been over for more than two months. I guess old habits were hard to break. Maybe the skipper was just being prudent and didn't want to trust the Japs, who might have still had die-hard subs loose and patrolling for kills. Many ground troops on bypassed islands didn't give up for many years.

I have a photo that someone took of several of us on the deck of the *Griggs*. In it are Corporal Robert W. Pierce, PFC John J. Plankers, PFC William L. Aydelotte—all of A Company and all of California—and myself.

ROBERT W. PIERCE, Company A

Troop quarters were crowded and the food was not too good, but we were glad to be heading home.



Marine Corps birthday menu aboard the *Griggs*: front cover and menu page. Another page listed the senior Naval and Marine Corps officers aboard; the back page had the words to the Marine Hymn. (Downey)

WELCOME IN SAN DIEGO

For the band, the majorettes, the American Red Cross, and the Salvation Army on the dock at San Diego, the welcoming of returning troops from overseas must have become routine. But for all those aboard the *USS Griggs*, the emotional impact was tremendous and unforgettable. That was the first sight of U.S. soil and a major milestone in the journey home. For those who had sailed from San Diego with the Battalion, and were now returning, the total time overseas had been 22½ months—six months afloat, 16½ months ashore on islands.

STEPHEN MARUSKY, Company B

As we got closer to San Diego we could hear radio broadcasts from the States. After not hearing advertisements the whole time overseas, it seemed funny to hear them again. We first saw the U.S. at about 0830 on November 15. It was a thrill riding into port, with a Marine band and three drum majorettes giving us a reception. Everybody went wild. We disembarked at about 1100, and went straight to Camp Pendleton.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

The last night aboard ship there was radio music from a San Diego station piped into the troops' bunk areas (bunks about three high), and the music included Bing Crosby singing "White Christmas." I don't know about the other guys, but I had big tears in my eyes. The next morning, November 15, we pulled into the dock at "Dago." A USMC band was playing. When we finally filed off with our gear, we saw the Salvation Army and the Red Cross on the dock in separate buildings, but most of us headed for the Salvation Army unit. I imagine they had cookies or doughnuts, but the real attraction was *milk*! It had been 22 months since I had tasted milk. We were soon loaded into open 6X6 trucks, and the convoy of us headed for Camp Pendleton, about 46 miles north of "Dago." Something I've always regretted is that I left my dog tags hung on the chains supporting my bunk on the ship.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

We docked in San Diego at long last. We had been gone about 23 months. There was a band and some majorettes, and when we hit land, we were given doughnuts and coffee or chocolate. We boarded 6X6 trucks and headed for Camp Pendleton.

GEORGE F. ROBERTS, Company D

I don't recall any parade, band, flags, or anything except Hank (Henry F.) Fleissner's wife waiting on the dock. Hank went over the side and down the mooring line without so much as a salute to the colors, the O.D., or anything. We were all happy for him and knew our turn was coming.

WILLIS D. BOOTH, Company D

I will never forget the docking at San Diego with the band and all the welcoming back. I must confess I cried. On the way to Camp Pendleton by truck I noticed, as we went through the community of Leucadia, some people in front of a small grocery store waving at us. I had the opportunity to visit the store and get acquainted with that family. Later on I married the daughter, and we have been married ever since.

CAMP PENDLETON

The First Armored Amphibian Battalion had come back to Camp Pendleton for disbanding and deactivation, a process completed by the end of November, 1945. On November 15, the day of debarkation and transfer to Camp Pendleton, the Battalion Commander, Major Richard G. Warga, reported to the Commanding General of the Marine Training and Replacement Command, located at Camp Pendleton. The strength of the Battalion at that time was down to 16 officers and 561 enlisted men.

For the men of the Battalion it was a time of waiting, calling home to families, drawing new uniforms, and rejoicing in their first liberty back in the States. The first night following arrival, the lines at the phone booths were long. It took several hours to succeed in calling home. The demand for milk and ice cream was so great, the only available PX was sold out of these commodities in a few minutes.

HARRY PAUL, Company D

We rode right to Camp Pendleton Area 17. I put in a call to my wife, Liz, but didn't get through till 2330. I couldn't understand it then, but she found it hard to talk. I hit the sack at midnight on a real mattress and springs, plus linen.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

Once at Pendleton, we hit the PX as soon as we could and bought a supply of candy, ice cream, and other goodies. It sure was great. A few days later we had a pay day, were issued new winter service uniforms, and got ready for liberty in Oceanside. Gunny Sergeant John W. Frye was in such a hurry to start liberty he didn't bother to put his stripes on and went out as a buck private.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

When we first arrived at Camp Pendleton, we had no greens (the dress uniform), so no liberty passes were issued. The second afternoon some of us, led by Luke (Ray W.) Hamlin, an A Company cook, went down to a mess hall and talked some of the guys into lending us their uniforms, a generous thing on their part. There was Luke, Corporal Banks B. Pennington, another guy I can't recall, and myself. The four of us went under the fence. To make a long story short, somebody slipped me a Mickey and I got rolled.

When I came to, my watch, money, and part of my uniform were gone. I had a hell of a time getting back to camp in time for roll call.

I spent almost two weeks at Pendleton, and I'm sure we had it pretty easy. We did get issued new greens, an overcoat, and a pair of nice dark brown dress shoes. One day my buddy, Bob (Robert W.) Pierce, lent me his aunt's car for about five of us to go into San Diego. About half way there, the car broke down. We had to hitchhike back to camp, where we got Bill (William J.) Carroll, Frank (Franklin M.) Savoth, and some other guys who seemed elated to be doing some work on a car. The problem was a thrown piston rod. Bob was extremely gracious, calm, cool, and collected about it, and didn't punch me out.

Bob Pierce invited several of us up to his folks' home in L.A. for Thanksgiving. We went and had a wonderful time. It was a regular party, with a lot of people. Bob had at least two nice-looking sisters, and they had girl friends there also. We ate and drank and visited, behaved ourselves, and really enjoyed and appreciated the day. I don't remember if we stayed overnight or not.

OTHER JOURNEYS HOME

Not everyone who returned to the States did so on the *Griggs*. For several reasons, a substantial minority of First Armored men took early departure and were moved by other transport. Of course, some of our wounded had been evacuated, not to return to the Battalion, and some of these had been returned home. Daniel Maynard, for example, was on Guam when the war ended. Several men had been transferred to officer candidate school in the States after being selected from the enlisted ranks: Byron G. Snea, David S. Watkins, Carl R. "Dick" Zenger, Earl M. Hill, Daniel Lieberman, and others. In addition, many of the old salts were high-pointers, some of them veterans of prewar duty in Guantanamo or Shanghai, or of Guadalcanal and other campaigns. In September and October following V-J Day, 57 such men with high point scores—11 officers and 46 enlisted men—were sent home early and returned to the States by whatever shipping was available.

BYRON G. SNEA, Company C

I left Guadalcanal in December 1944, the first man from the First Armored to be selected for officer candidate school back in the States. I went aboard the *USS Admiral Capps*, which was picking up wounded and some other troops on Guadalcanal. She sailed to Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides to pick up more wounded, and then sailed unescorted to San Diego. We celebrated Christmas 1944 aboard her, then arrived in San Diego a few days later. It was a wonderful, speedy voyage, not at all like my cruises on LSTs. My next assignment was OCS at Camp LeJeune, North Carolina, but as luck would have it, a request I had made for a V-12 college program assignment was granted, and the University of Southern California in Los Angeles became my new billet. When the war ended, I was eligible for discharge and gave up the Marine Corps.

Earl M. Hill, Company B

After leaving Okinawa for officer candidate school, I was stationed on Saipan briefly, then loaded with other OCS candidates onto an LST bound for Pearl Harbor. For the first time on my many LST voyages, I was quartered in relatively comfortable troop quarters. There being no tanks or other vehicles on the tank deck, we played basketball there. On August 8 we heard about the bomb drop on Hiroshima, and by the following night our convoy had discontinued zigzagging and turned on navigation and running lights. At Pearl Harbor we were loaded aboard the *USS Copahee*, a rather battered escort aircraft carrier, for transport to San Francisco. Compared to my earlier experiences, this voyage was truly luxurious. As we passed under the Golden Gate Bridge, shrouded in thick fog, I think all aboard shared my emotions of homecoming and thanksgiving.

During the long train ride to Camp Lejeune, I enjoyed brief visits with Bob (Robert G.) Pierce's family at Los Angeles and with Art (Arthur M.) Cochran's sister, Gwen, at New Orleans. By the time our group of officer candidate applicants arrived at Camp Lejeune, total victory in the Pacific was imminent, if not an accomplished fact, and the Marine Corps suddenly found itself with a surplus, rather than a shortage, of junior officers. We were offered three alternatives, one of which was discharge. After some discussion we elected discharge. A train ride took me to the Marine Barracks, Mare Island Navy Yard, California, where on September 27, 1945, I received my honorable discharge and the ubiquitous "Ruptured Duck."

WILLIAM D. GERMAIN, Company A

Because I had been overseas before on Guadalcanal, I was a high-pointer. Leaving for the States, we flew to Guam, where there was a transit center. There you were assigned to a ship the day you arrived and then had to wait for your ship to come in. We got a couple of beers a day, but had to line up for them. A photo in a newspaper called it the longest beer line in the world, and I believe it was. My ship finally came, a crowded troop ship, but we didn't care as we were going in the right direction. Arriving in the States, we were put on trains and shipped to the Great Lakes Naval Station and processed for discharge. On leaving, I rode the elevated and asked the conductor where the bus station was. I got off at that exit, walked one block, and came home.

THOMAS T. OYLER, Company C

I had a fairly high number in the point system. I spent several weeks after leaving the Battalion in a "waiting for transportation" camp. I agreed to go on a patrol craft which was a converted minesweeper. It was the only thing available for several weeks. Fourteen enlisted men and I were the only passengers on a long trip. We stopped for four days at Pearl Harbor. I left the ship every morning and took a bus into Honolulu

and out to the beach at Waikiki. As we approached California, I arose at 4:30 a.m. one morning to get the first view of the Golden Gate Bridge. It was quite a moving experience seeing it come through the early morning haze.

Arrival in San Francisco was about on Armistice Day. I was given the option of being discharged some time in the next several weeks, or of going home for Thanksgiving and then going to the Great Lakes Naval Training Center for discharge. I chose the latter. Discharge took four days, but it wasn't too bad because my quarters were next door to the field where Paul Brown practiced his great Great Lakes Navy football team.

ROBERT A. FISH, H&S Company

I was transported home on the *USS Lenawee* with about 5000 people to Terminal Island California. I got my discharge about two weeks later and headed home.

TROOP TRAINS AND HOMECOMING

The First Armored began the last acts of disbandment. On November 26, the Battalion transferred 526 men, most of them to separation centers in various parts of the country, a few to San Diego for reassignment. On the 30th, the very few remaining officers and men were detached and transferred to other units, either for discharge or for reassignment. Also on November 30, in the last Battalion War Diary to be submitted, Major Warga reported that, on order of the Commanding General, Marine Training and Replacement Command, the First Armored Amphibian Battalion was officially disbanded. After 27 months and 12 days of very active service, the Battalion ceased to exist.

The transfer orders of November 26 sent 526 enlisted members of the Battalion to six different destinations. The regulars who still had enlistment time to serve—73 in number—were dispatched to San Diego for reassignment. The rest, eligible for discharge, were sent to various regional separation centers. One group of 82 men was transferred to a separation battalion right in Camp Pendleton; another 84 men went to a separation company at Marine Corps Barracks in San Diego. Three other detachments were destined for long troop train rides before reaching separation centers—157 men to Great Lakes, Illinois, 52 to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, and 78 to Bainbridge, Maryland. Ranking NCOs were placed in charge of the groups—Ronald U. Caraffi for Great Lakes, Dale L. Barker for Lejeune, and Paul B. Wigsten for Bainbridge. The trains departed directly from Camp Pendleton.

GEORGE PAPALIAS, Company D

The group I was in was transferred to the Marine Corps Base in San Diego. We reported to a separation center, where we were to be processed and mustered out of the Corps. My youngest brother "Socs" was in boot camp at the Recruit Depot. I made arrangements to visit with him one evening. You know how boot camp was. We were

able to arrange base liberty for him for one evening. About the only place we could go was to the slop chute and have a couple of beers. There were several men there when we arrived. I introduced my brother around, but the only man I remember for sure was Platoon Sergeant Ed (Edwin F.) Cieslak. We had a great visit, then back to boot camp for "Socs."

We went through a thorough medical examination by medical officers, then to an area to receive our discharge and "Release from Active Duty" papers. We also had a final pay day, including transportation money to the point of enlistment; mine was San Francisco. I got on the train in San Diego, transferred at Los Angeles, and went on to Oakland. Once in Oakland I took the ferry to San Francisco and home. Guess what? No one home. I wasn't expected as I hadn't told anyone exactly when I would get home.

DONALD C. HOUSTON, Company B

On the troop train going back east, every time the train stopped, guys would pile off looking for ice cream and "pogie bait." Because of this several men missed the train when it pulled out of the station. The young lieutenant in charge of the train put out an order that no more personnel were to get off the train under any circumstances. When we pulled into the station at North Platte, Nebraska, a ladies' group, that had word a troop train was due, had doughnuts and coffee for us. They had waited till about 11:00 p.m. for us to arrive. Well, the officer in charge had already lost eight or ten men, and he would not let anyone off. Boy, the lady in charge gave him a blasting out, but no one got off. We continued on to the Bainbridge, Maryland, Naval Station for discharge.

ROBERT B. WILSON, Company D

After we returned to the States, many of us from the Midwest were put on a troop train going to Great Lakes above Chicago for discharge. Pat (John P.) Greene of B Company knew that some of the coaches had a private compartment which would accommodate three people, and he commandeered one for himself, Bill (Willis D.) Booth and me. We had the services of a porter whom Pat could convince to get anything for us. Those four days were an experience I'll never forget. We didn't have a care in the world, and every time the train would stop for water etc., half of the guys would make a beeline for the closest bar to stock up on liquid refreshments. The train would be starting to pull out, and the men would be running down the tracks after it. I don't think we lost anybody, probably because of a friendly engineer who understood the situation.

When we got to Great Lakes, we were told in no uncertain terms by personnel handling the discharge procedure that if we wanted to get out in the minimum of time, without delay, not to find anything wrong with our separation documents. While I was from Mason City, Iowa, I had enlisted in Peoria, Illinois, and thought they might furnish transportation cost only to Peoria. I was really surprised when I was given \$1.28, the

cost of a train ticket to downtown Chicago. Remembering what they had said about any mistakes, I took the \$1.28 and hitchhiked the 400 miles home to Mason City.

DALE L. BARKER *Company D*

The trains took us to Los Angeles, where the Lejeune and Bainbridge groups had to change trains after a seven-hour layover. The Lejeune train moved slowly across the country and was frequently in sidings. The route from Los Angeles was through Yuma, Tucson, El Paso, San Antonio, Houston, Beaumont, New Orleans, Montgomery, and Atlanta. We arrived at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina on Saturday, December 1.

On Monday we were transferred into processing companies, but it was Wednesday before physical exams and other discharge processing began. One day we were shown a movie short, with Robert Benchley, one of my favorite comedians, warning us not to throw our money away on drink or be conned by B-girls on the way home. They also ran a little "shipping over" movie, but no one rushed to reenlist. I discovered that a Marine friend from pre-First Armored days was stationed at Lejeune and living off base. I managed to get out one evening to have dinner with him and his wife. Along with some other First Armored men, I was discharged on Friday, December 7, 1945, the fourth anniversary of Pearl Harbor. I got home without throwing all my money away.

ROBERT W. PIERCE, *Company A*

There had to be one last snafu. There were two Pierces in A Company. The other Pierce lived somewhere in the Midwest—Kansas, I think. My record book went midwest with him, and the Marine Corps could not discharge me without the proper credentials. It took about ten days to get the paperwork straightened out, and I remained in a "standby unit" until my record book was returned. I was discharged December 12, 1945.

FRED ADDISON, *Company A*

Leaving Pendleton, we said our good-byes. I'm sure it was tough saying good-bye. On the troop train going home, we spent the time talking, playing cards, and looking out of the windows as we crossed the country. Every time the train stopped in the middle of a town, a crowd of Marines would race pell-mell down the street trying to find a beer or liquor store. We would come running back, lugging a case or two of beer. Sometimes it was a challenge to see if the car could be boarded in time, but we always made it.

I think we pulled right into the Great Lakes Naval Station near Chicago, probably on December 4. One day we had to take our seabags and all possessions into a huge gymnasium. We were told to line up by all four walls, with 10 or 15 feet between each of us. We then had to empty our seabags and packs, arranging stuff on the floor. I guess they wanted to see if we had any grenades, machine guns, or the like. We did have to turn in all our "782 gear," which were canteens, pistol belts, first aid kits,

entrenching tools, shelter halves, ponchos, etc. These they took, plus our Kabar knives. We were asked if we had all of our uniforms. I quickly shoved my dress shoes under something else and said I hadn't any shoes. I was supplied a pair soon after.

On our final day there, an officer gave a talk telling us of the nation's and the Corps' appreciation of our service. A short film was shown, and The Marine Hymn was played while all of stood at attention. I'm sure there were a few damp eyes in the crowd. Marines are a sentimental bunch when it comes to The Hymn. A short pitch was made for reenlistment, but I'm sure it was futile. We signed some more papers, and were civilians. Sometime in that last two days, "ruptured ducks" were sewn onto the right breast of our green uniform blouse (jacket). This was an all-service emblem denoting an honorably discharged serviceman.

It was once again to the train station, I think by Navy bus. The small handful of us at my station shook hands for the last time, and I boarded my train. This was the New York Central line, heading for Detroit. It was December 6. When the train pulled into Battle Creek after dark, I saw a huge lighted Christmas tree on top of the Central National Bank and Trust Company building. My folks, brother, and sisters met me when I got off the train. It was cold! I was home.

LUTHER M. FLATTUM, Company B

The whole time I was overseas I had exchanged letters with Dottie and looked forward to a happy life together after the war. Upon discharge I took a train to Seattle, where I had enlisted and where Dottie was. After a warm, but somewhat tense, welcome from Dottie and her dad, Dottie took me into the bedroom. Hold on, you who are reading this. Do not get ahead of me. This was Dottie's way to tell me she was going to marry a lawyer. She was so sweet that she had held off sending me a "Dear John" letter.

WILLIAM C. MOIR, Company D

After discharge in Maryland, another fellow, Bob Lincoln, and I headed north. We went by bus as far as Philadelphia, where we got out to get cleaned up and shaved, so we would look like Marines when we got home. Lincoln was going to a town in Massachusetts called Buzzards Bay, I believe. And I was going to South Ozone Park, Queens, New York. After getting cleaned up, we got a bus the next morning and started for home. When I got home, the whole family was there. A big celebration, a lot of laughter, a lot of joy, a lot of happiness.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Parade Rest

Though the First Armored Amphibian Battalion passed into history on November 30, 1945, echoes of its existence have persisted. The performance of the Battalion while it was active, the amphibian tank around which it was organized, and the men themselves have all had their effect on later events. The LVTA-1s and LVTA-4s no longer exist, but they represent stages in the evolution of more powerful, more battle-worthy amphibious assault vehicles in operation today. The spirit of the First Armored survives in continuing bonds of comradeship that unite the men who served, brings them together in annual reunions, and inspires their determination to see this history produced.

AFTER THE LVTA-4

Even in the spring of 1945, production had already begun on a successor to the LVTA-4, called the LVTA-5. Very similar in appearance, armor, and performance to the LVTA-4, it largely featured modifications which the 1st and 2d Armored Amphibian Battalions had previously made in the field on LVTA-4s. No more of these were produced after the Japanese surrender. Serviceable LVTA-4s and LVTA-5s were put into storage until 1950, when they were resurrected for the Korean War. That was the last active service of the LVTA series of armored amphibians. In Viet Nam and some later amphibious operations, the stage was held by a new generation of LVTs, most of them equipped only for troop and cargo transport. One version, however, the LVT(H)6, carried a 105mm gun mounted in a turret. All LVT models were later superseded by water-jet propelled amphibians (the AAV series) and by air-cushion vehicles (LCACs). None of the present generation of assault amphibians is armed with so powerful a weapon as the 75mm howitzer of the LVTA-4. The helicopter has had a major effect on the conduct of amphibious landings, but amphibious assault vehicles in their present form are still considered essential.

When the Korean War erupted in June 1950, a new First Armored Amphibian Battalion was hurriedly formed. It arrived in Korea too late for the Inchon landing, and was subsequently employed mainly as mobile artillery, a type of mission pioneered by General Louis Metzger and the First Armored Amphibian Battalion in 1944 and 1945.

THE YEARS AFTER

Though the strength of the First Armored Amphibian Battalion was set officially at about 840 officers and men, there were those who were with the Battalion at its beginning, but were later lost as casualties or as transfers for various reasons. Other men came in late as replacements. In all, more than 1200 men served in the Battalion for all or part of its existence. First Armored men seem to have done what most veterans did who were released by the millions after the war. Most became permanent, full-time civilians, getting jobs, getting married, and raising families. Some returned to prewar jobs, others found new work. Some took advantage of their GI benefits to join the flood of veterans who entered colleges to earn degrees, or special schools to enhance occupational skills. Regardless of the path taken to get there, the careers of former First Armored men show great diversity. A very limited sampling has found men working in big business, small business, sales, industry, government, law, medicine, education, research, construction, the arts, crafts, agriculture, and other fields. They worked for large corporations, partnerships, small retail shops, repair shops, factories, ship yards, big ranches, family farms, schools, and universities. A thorough survey would no doubt reveal some unusual careers. First Armored men have lived and worked in every state, and a few in foreign countries.

While most men returned to civilian life at war's end, some chose the Marine Corps as a career, and some others were required to finish enlistments. Some joined reserve units, not always Marine Corps units. Between World War II and the Korean War, demobilization had drastically reduced available manpower in all the services. The Marine Corps was down from almost half a million to 75,000 men. To meet the crisis in Korea in 1950, men in service were moved quickly to the war zone, and many men in the reserves were called up. Louis Metzger, then a colonel, saw service in Korea. Not many First Armored men of World War II served with the reincarnated First Armored.

JAMES A. CRUICE, Company A

I was discharged from the First Armored on December 15, 1945, but in 1947 I enlisted in Company A, 11th Infantry Battalion, USMCR, in Seattle. When the Korean War broke out in June 1950, I was recalled to active duty and sent to Camp Pendleton to help form Company I, 3d Battalion, 7th Marines as a machine gun section leader.

I participated in action at Inchon, Seoul, Hagaru Ri, Koto Ri, Yudam Ni, and the Chosin Reservoir, where I was wounded by a Chinese hand grenade on December 2, 1950. I was evacuated by air to Japan and then to the U.S.. Discharged in March 1951

from the Naval Hospital in Bremerton, Washington, I was reassigned to Camp Pendleton as an infantry tactics instructor. I was discharged from the service on July 7, 1951.

BILL E. SIMPSON, Company D

After I was discharged, I stayed in the reserves in Salt Lake City, and was sent to Korea when the Korean war broke out. I was back in the First Armored Amphibian Battalion and stayed a year in Korea. I was discharged in 1951 and didn't stay in the reserves.

DANIEL H. MAYNARD, Company A

I was in Korea for sixteen months, where I was a platoon leader with five Sherman tanks. Then I did a tour of duty as an automatic weapons instructor at the Naval Academy, which was my second tour there. After that I was a sergeant major in amtracs at LeJeune, did recruiting duty in Erie, Pennsylvania, took a twilight transfer to the Marine Barracks in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and retired in July 1959. After that I put in 22 years in the Navy Yard, working on nuke subs, before I retired for good in 1980. Now I live in a small town six miles from the Yard and just hunt and fish.

I got my first Bronze Star in Guam and the second in Korea. My first Purple Heart was in Guam and the second in Okinawa. I was always slow to duck.

FRED ADDISON, Company A

On May 2, 1949, another fellow from Kellogg's (where I worked) and I signed up for a four-year hitch in a U.S. Army Reserve glider infantry outfit that met and trained at Fort Custer, Michigan, just adjacent to Battle Creek. When the Korean War broke out on June 25, 1950, we were sure, being veterans and in an infantry outfit, that our reserve unit would be activated, and we would soon be over there. Thinking I could get better duty in the Air Force, I went to a recruiting station to enlist. Fortunately, no married men were being accepted at the time. Our reserve unit at Fort Custer was not activated, and my four-year hitch was up in 1953. I was discharged as a Sergeant 1st Class, and did not reenlist.

After I retired from Kellogg Company in 1988, I worked as a consultant for them in Korea and Japan. After that, my wife, Dottie, and I had a marvelous vacation tour in Japan. We ended up in Hiroshima for two or three nights. While there we toured the museum and memorial they have. Dottie sensed, though I didn't, some quite hostile looks and feelings from a couple of elderly ladies in the museum. Although the atomic blast was a horrible thing, it undoubtedly saved hundreds of thousands of Japanese, let alone Americans. The museum and its grounds, very close to "ground zero," have a very sobering effect on *all* who enter. Hiroshima had rebuilt and was a very nice city, with only a few scars of the blast evident. My own experiences with the people of Japan were all positive. They were all courteous, friendly, and helpful.

THE REUNIONS

For over thirty years the relations between former First Armored men was on an informal, individual level. Whether contacts were regular or sporadic, many friendships endured through the years, sustained by letters, Christmas cards, phone calls, or personal visits. Sometimes, if geography or travel routes were favorable, three or four members could manage mini-reunions to talk about old times. In at least one instance, the relationship of old buddies was stronger than just friendship or comradeship. Robert G. Pierce and Byron G. Sneva became brothers-in-law when Bob's sister, Dorris, and By were married in 1945.

DONALD L. FERCHAU, Company A

In 1958 or '59, Ollie (Oliver T.) Dowling, Thomas I. Coleman, Gottlieb Spoerle, and E. Jack Brown, all of A Company, met at my house in the Chicago area. Then the five of us, along with my wife, Helen, went out to a nightclub, the Ivanhoe, which had an ambience like a medieval dungeon. We drank and talked about the times in the First Armored, but we also began talking up the idea of a Battalion reunion. Ollie was especially interested, but it was not to happen for almost twenty more years.

THE FIRST REUNION

A new phase in First Armored history opened in 1977 in Rapid City, South Dakota. On the initiative of two Company A men, E. Jack Brown and Oliver Dowling, 25 or more ex-First Armored men gathered, some with their wives, for a reunion. These two A Company men invited all Battalion members they could locate, but because they had kept in touch mostly with men in their own company, that first reunion was predominantly an A Company affair. Anyone from the Battalion was welcome, however, and there was a sprinkling of members from other companies. That meeting may have been small, but it was the beginning of a long series of annual reunions.

GEORGE LEGINO, Company B

The first reunion of the First Armored Amphibian Battalion was held in October, 1977, at Rapid City, South Dakota, thanks to a group of fellows from A Company, who were the ones to get the reunions started. Oliver Dowling and his wife, Millie, hosted the first reunion at their motel, the Holiday Inn-Rapid City. They gave very generously of their time and facilities. Oliver Dowling passed away a short time after the reunion.

WILLIAM J. LA FERRIERE, Company A

I first heard of a reunion from Bill (William J.) Carroll in his 1976 Christmas card. I wrote Bill and got the information about it. Oliver Dowling and Jack Brown were putting it together in Rapid City at the Holiday Inn. Ollie managed the hotel, and what

ATTENDANCE AT THE FIRST REUNION

As remembered by George Legino, William La Ferriere, and Donald Ferchau

Company A—E. Jack Brown, Maurice J. Burns, Harry J. Broderick, William J. Carroll, David F. Cavadini, Paul H. Dotur, Oliver T. Dowling, Donald L. Ferchau, Ralph E. Hauth, Lucius Q. Henderson, William J. La Ferriere, Howard L. Mueller, Robert G. Pierce, Robert L. Schaninger, William T. Shader.

Company B—William E. Brummond, George Legino.

Company C—William L. Eubank.

Company D—Lawrence C. Dhom, John F. McKay, Harold K. Miller, William C. Moir, Lloyd E. Tidd, Richard L. Warp.

H&S Company—Charles C. Bahin.

a great job he and Jack did putting it together. Rooms were \$10.00. Including some wives, more than 30 people showed up. The gals hit it off beautifully, which made it really nice. I remember walking into the hospitality room and seeing the faces of A Company guys that I recognized immediately after thirty years. How could you forget faces like that? The guys from the other companies became immediate friends. I don't have words to express the feeling we had. It was just wonderful. We visited, told stories, laughed, and talked about the next reunion. We even got (David F.) Cavadini to sing "Ragtime Cowboy Joe" with the band in the bar. We visited Mt. Rushmore, and what a ride we had. Our banquet was held on the top floor of a hotel in downtown Rapid City. We were entertained by Bill (William T.) Shader with his jokes and stories about his wife's garage sales. Once home, we began looking for more people for the next reunion. I'm so happy we have continued to keep having them.

BUILDING A TRADITION

The first reunion succeeded so well, there had to be more. No one was willing to quit after only one reunion. In the following year, 1978, Harry J. Broderick of Company A hosted the second reunion in Phoenix, Arizona. The attendance was somewhat larger, and by the third reunion, in Des Moines, Iowa, the tradition was well established. As of 1995, nineteen reunions have been held in cities all over the country.

First Armored veterans have not organized themselves formally as an association with officers or any sort of executive board. Organization is minimal and exists primarily to make it possible to stage the annual reunions. Toward that end, there are five company representatives, one for each company. The duties of each company "rep" are to mail out announcements of upcoming meetings, report to their members on meetings just completed, and maintain roster information for his company. Each reunion is hosted by one or more volunteers, who propose a reunion site and invite members to come there. A Treasurer receives and disburses money needed for the reunions.

There is variety in the lively activities and entertainment arranged by the hosts, but otherwise reunions follow a somewhat standard format. They are held at a hotel, in a convenient week in the fall. Registration begins typically on Wednesday afternoon, and departures are usually made on Sunday morning. An absolutely essential feature is a hospitality room, with a bar where drinks are dispensed free by volunteer bartenders, though contributions to a pot are accepted. Thursdays and Fridays are devoted to special programs or excursions to local attractions. A business meeting is held on Saturday afternoons, at which the principal items discussed are details about the next reunion and invitations to future reunions. Finances, schedules, and a few other matters

THE FIRST ARMORED AMPHIBIAN BATTALION

The First Nineteen Reunions

	<u>Year</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>Host Company</u>	<u>Host Committee</u>
1	1977	Rapid City SD	A	Jack Brown, Oliver Dowling
2	1978	Phoenix AZ	A	Harry Broderick
3	1979	Des Moines IA	B+D	Pat Green, Harold Miller, Robert Wilson
4	1980	Ocean City NJ	A+C	Paul Breme, Pete Mucci, Franklin Savoth
5	1981	Denver CO	B	Gale Calhoun, George Legino
6	1982	San Diego CA	A+B +H&S	Jack Brown, Ellery Ferson, Paul Holmes, Louis Metzger
7	1983	Kansas City KS	B	Grady Coker, James Dyer, Lloyd Kitch
8	1984	Milwaukee WI	A+D	Robert Barthuli, Howard Mueller, Robert Otto, Frederick Schwantes
9	1985	Las Vegas NV	C	Chick Cutright, William Walker
10	1986	Mpls-St. Paul MN	A	William La Ferriere
11	1987	San Antonio TX	D	Joseph Baumbach, Herman Vernon
12	1988	Portland OR	A+D	Howard Van Kessel, John Wilson, Richard Zenger
13	1989	Washington DC	C	Roger Behling, Robert Blaemire, Chick Cutright, William Rogers, Alfonse Scerbo, Gerald Thompson
14	1990	Las Vegas NV	C	Chick Cutright, William Rogers, Alfonse Scerbo, Gerald Thompson, William Walker
15	1991	Tampa FL	D	Robert Barthuli, Lawrence Dhom, Richard Warp
16	1992	Danvers MA	A	David Cavadini
17	1993	San Diego CA	A+C +D + H&S	Robert Barthuli, Louis Metzger, Thomas Oyler, George Papalias, Robert Pierce, Albert Thompson, William Walker, Richard Warp
18	1994	Dearborn MI	A+B	Fred Addison, James Bush, William Carter, Robert Flinn, William Germain, Max Johnson
19	1995	Colorado Springs CO	B	George Legino, Grady Coker

are also dealt with. A banquet, with a speaker and some entertainment, is held on Saturday evening. Also at the banquet, all hands join in for a spirited rendition of *The Marines' Hymn*. Until recent years a memorial service was held on Sunday morning, but currently it has been worked into the Saturday schedule. A Marine Corps color guard is on hand for the memorial service and, company by company, the names of deceased members are read.

The 1995 roster, prepared by Gerald and Eva Thompson, listed 255 names. Attendance at reunions has ranged from about 75 to about 100 Marines, with many wives also in attendance. The reunions came too late for many members of the Battalion, and others, for various reasons, have been unable to attend. Wives have always come to First Armored reunions and have made valuable contributions to reunion operations. Many of them have formed lasting friendships among themselves. The spirit of comradeship among the Marines is strong. Though the sentiment may be felt and expressed in various ways, one man has summed it up by saying, "These men are like brothers to me."

GEORGE LEGINO, Company A

My wife and I have attended every Battalion reunion so far, from the first one in Rapid City to the latest one in Colorado Springs. These reunions have offered the First Armored Amphibian Battalion a chance to renew memories and be together again.

THE GUAM CELEBRATION

The governor of Guam issued an invitation to all U.S. servicemen who had participated in the liberation of Guam to return in July 1994 as the island's guests to help celebrate the 50th anniversary of that great event. It was a weeklong celebration marked by ceremonies, parades, commemorative plaques, special publications, intense media coverage, and other activities. Five members of the First Armored Amphibian Battalion went to Guam to represent the Battalion and be a part of the celebration. At the next Battalion reunion, in Dearborn, Michigan, reports on the Guam excursion were a highlight of the banquet program. Jerry Thompson's description of the occasion and General Louis Metzger's letter, which follow, are eloquent accounts of the First Armored's presence for the celebration.

GERALD L. THOMPSON, Company C

For the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Guam, former Marines, sailors, and soldiers who participated in the liberation were invited by the people of Guam to come to Guam and help them celebrate. Approximately one thousand "liberators" returned to Guam for the occasion. From the First Armored Amphibian Battalion, the returning liberators included Paul H. Dotur, Chick (Forest F.) Cutright, and me, all of C Company, Al (Richard A.) Vogel of H&S Company, and General Louis Metzger, the Battalion Commander. With the exception of Chick and

myself, almost all of the people returning did so in organized groups. We managed to find the island by ourselves. We stayed in a downtown Agana hotel in a very nice location. In fact, you had to go at least 75 to 100 yards to even *find* a tattoo parlor.

During our stay we were treated wonderfully by all the people we came in contact with on the island, especially the Chamorros. The Chamorros suffered greatly during Japan's 31-month occupation of the island, and are very appreciative of our liberation of their island. As an example of their appreciation, the first night that Chick and I were in the hotel restaurant and bar, we mentioned that we were going to rent a car so that we could see the island. The manager said that would not be necessary. She immediately telephoned her boy friend and borrowed his car. She then called her ex-husband and asked if he would chauffeur us around the island the next day. He agreed, and the next morning he picked us up early, and we toured the island all day Monday.

Monday night, while watching TV, we saw that Al Vogel was on Guam and being interviewed by a local disc jockey. We called Al. He informed us that the disk jockey was from his home town of Louisville, Kentucky, and had loaned him a car for the week. Needless to say, the three of us spent the rest of the week seeing the island in the borrowed car. We attended many ceremonies and memorial dedications, and they were all quite touching. Al became very popular on the island as he appeared on TV almost nightly.

The parade commemorating the 50th anniversary of Guam's liberation was staged on July 21, 1994. It was quite a spectacular event. It lasted over six hours. The U.S. Marines sent a group of men over from Okinawa to participate in the activities. In the parade there was the marching band, followed by marching troops, followed by jeeps and other vehicles.

When Chick and I first arrived on Guam, we visited the Governor's office and asked if we could march in the parade. We were told that they would love for us to be a part of the parade and we could march anywhere we wanted to. So using this as authority, we decided to fall in between the Marine troops and the vehicles. This we did. Things went okay until the first time the parade stopped. A Marine gunnery sergeant came back and informed us that they were a unit and it would be better if we would fall in behind the vehicles. About this time a Marine captain walked up and told the sergeant that it was *our* parade and that we could march anywhere we wanted to. So Al, Chick, and I, holding a banner saying, "ALOHA FIRST ARMORED," proceeded in the parade in the position we had selected.

On our last day, Chick, Al, and I flew to Saipan and spent the day. It brought back many memories. We located our old campsite, which is now the site of a moderate-size hotel. All three of us—Al, Chick, and Jerry—have agreed that the week we spent on Guam and Saipan was the most enjoyable week of our lives.

On the day of the parade, General Metzger was in the reviewing stand, and the following is a copy of a letter he sent to me after we returned home.

LOUIS METZGER, Battalion Commander

Dear Jerry: When the Commandant invited me to accompany him to Guam for the 50th anniversary of its liberation, I knew that you and a few others from our battalion would be there, but had no idea how to reach you. Can you imagine my surprise and joy in seeing you and Chick Cutright and Al Vogel in the parade carrying the splendid sign reading, "FIRST ARMORED AMPHIBIAN BATTALION." It was so very special!

For the preceding several days I had been making the rounds of ceremonies and memorials. Our wonderful battalion and its terrific Marines were always in my mind. It was proper that the 3d Marine Division and the 1st Provisional Brigade be recognized as the major units in that battle. Yet to me our own unit was the special one. We led the attack and took heavy casualties, and I kept wishing there was some way our Marines could be recognized.

When you three, and the sign with our battalion's name went by, it made more than my day. It made the whole trip worthwhile. Your spirit and joy at representing us was special. You had the look and swagger (in the finest sense of the word) of warriors who were proud of themselves and their unit. You have my thanks, and the thanks of all of us you represented, for seeing that our contribution to that battle and to the war was not forgotten.

Please express my thanks to Chick and Al and hope that some mention of the event is made at our next reunion.

THE SPIRIT LIVES ON

The First Armored Amphibian Battalion shares in the esprit which has marked the U.S. Marine Corps through all of its proud history. Not only among those still serving is the spirit strong, but also among those for whom their "time in hell" is now a persistent memory. Across the country they form associations and hold reunions to preserve the memories, the friendships, and the spirit of the Corps. The spirit lives in the First Armored, in men with memories of battles and comrades in a war half a century past. The spirit expresses itself in many ways, but we can demonstrate it here in the words of a few men.

ROBERT A. FISH, H&S Company

I consider my service in the U.S. Marines as a member of the First Armored Amphibian Battalion the greatest and most thrilling period of my life. I met many men that I could trust under the most difficult conditions, and I loved them like brothers. I always felt that the old China Marines provided a foundation the young 2d lieutenants could rely on for their judgment. Gunnery Sergeant Daniel H. Maynard was one of those Marines in my opinion.

DONALD SCHARF, Company D

What began with Pearl Harbor ended with the defeat of Japan. Our American fighting forces drove the Japanese back more than 3000 miles. War is hell, and many brave men sacrificed their lives for this victory. May they never be forgotten. I was proud to be a part of the First Armored Amphibian Battalion, the first of its kind to serve in war.

GEORGE F. ROBERTS, Company D

What has always burned me up is that on my discharge it says First Separation Company instead of the First Armored Amphibian Battalion, an outfit that I was mighty proud to have served with.

JOHN F. KELLY, Company D

On March 14, 1994, Margaret, my wife of fifty years, died. As she wished, two First Armored friends and another wartime friend served as pallbearers at her funeral. The First Armored men were Robert C. Otto and Joseph B. O'Brien, both of D Company. They came from their homes in Wisconsin for the funeral. The bonds of friendship forged in our times together in the First Armored have remained strong all these years.

BEAUFORD A. GALIEN, Company C

One of our comrades said at our last reunion, "This all seems like a bad dream," and I agree. I would like to express my appreciation to all of the officers and men of the First Armored Amphibian Battalion. They all did a beautiful job, which made us get home all the faster. Many happy anniversaries to the First Armored Amphibian Battalion.

GLOSSARY

Ack-ack. Anti-aircraft fire.

AFRS. Armed Forces Radio Service: Network for delivering prime time radio programs and local programming to service personnel overseas.

AKA. Naval assault cargo ship.

Amtank. Amphibian tank, a tracked assault vehicle, employed for firing on hostile beaches, especially across reefs. Officially, LVT(A), for Landing Vehicle, Tracked (Armored); also Armored amphibian.. Unofficially, LVTA, Amtank, or Amphtank See also **LVTA-1**, **LVTA-4**.

Amtrac. Amphibian tractor, a tracked vehicle for transporting troops and cargo from ship to shore in assault landings, especially across reefs. Officially, LVT, for Landing Vehicle, Tracked. Unofficially, Amtrac or Amphtrac.

APA. Naval troop transport ship.

Atabrine. Trade name for quinacrine, a medicine in tablet form used to prevent malaria.

Baka bomb. Piloted, rocket-driven Japanese suicide missile, carried to the target by, and launched from, a twin-engine bomber plane.

BAR. Browning automatic rifle.

Battlewagon. Battleship.

Boondockers. Field boots.

Boondocks. Rough terrain, having swamps, brush, jungle, or other cover.

Bowser boat. Vessel used for refueling.

BSI. British Solomon Islands, British protectorate consisting of Guadalcanal and most, but not all, Solomon Islands.

Bulkhead. Wall. Aboard ship, a partition between compartments.

C rations.. Field rations consisting of a can of either stew, hash, or meat & beans and a can of crackers, with candy, sugar, powdered fruit juice, or coffee.

Can. See **Destroyer**.

CBs. See **Seabees**.

CO. Commanding officer.

CP. Command post. Also Communications personnel, e.g., a radio operator.

DE. Destroyer escort, a warship similar to a destroyer, but smaller.

Deck. Floor, even a dirt floor.

Demo. Demolition, as in *demolition charge*.

Destroyer. A small, fast warship.

Doggie. U.S. soldier; short for *dogface*.

D Rations. Field rations consisting of very hard chocolate.

DUKW. 4-wheeled, rubber-tired amphibious truck. Pronounced "Duck."

414 GLOSSARY

F6F. Navy carrier fighter plane, the Grumman Hellcat.

FDC. Fire Direction Center. Center for coördinating artillery fire of a battery, company, or larger unit.

FO. Forward observer for reporting to artillery units information on targets, accuracy of fire, etc.

Frogmen. See **UDT**.

G-1, 2, 3, 4. Respectively, the Personnel Officer, Intelligence Officer, Operations & Training Officer, and Logistics Officer of a large Marine Corps unit. Similar designations were used specifically at the levels of battalion (B-), regiment (R-), division (D-), etc.

Garand rifle. M-1 rifle, using .30-caliber ammunition.

GQ. General quarters, a state of maximum readiness for action aboard ship.

Gunny. Gunnery sergeant.

Hatch. Door.

Head. Latrine.

Higgins boat. See **LCVP**.

H&S. Headquarters & Service. Each company had an H&S section, and the Battalion had an H&S company.

Jg. Junior grade, as in the Naval officer's rank, lieutenant (jg).

Joe. Coffee.

K rations. Field rations with a breakfast, dinner, and supper, each in a separate cardboard box.

Kabar. Sheath knife

Knee mortar. Americans' name for a Japanese light grenade launcher, 50mm, fired with its baseplate resting on the ground.

Kunai grass. Dense sharp-edged grass, up to 8 feet high, common on Guadalcanal.

Ladder. Stairs.

LCI. Landing Craft, Infantry. A Naval craft employed in landings, armed with 20mm and 40mm guns and sometimes with mortars or rocket launchers.

LCM. Landing Craft, Mechanized. A Naval craft employed for transporting troops or tanks onto beaches.

LCVP. Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel. A boat used for landing troops, vehicles, or general cargo from ships to beaches or to the edge of reefs. Also called, for its inventor, Higgins Boat.

Liberty. Authorized absence from the base or camp.

Lister bag. Large cylindrical, waterproof canvas bag, usually white, used to dispense fresh drinking water.

Little Joe. Unofficial name for a backup generator, mounted in each amtank, for recharging the batteries when necessary.

LMG. Light machine gun.

- LSD.** Landing Ship, Dock. Seagoing ship with a large built-in dry dock. The largest of the landing ships.
- LSM.** Landing Ship, Medium. A seagoing ship, smaller than an LST, with an open well deck for transporting tanks.
- LSM(R).** Landing Ship, Medium (Rocket). An LSM modified to deliver rocket barrages. Also carried 5-inch, 20mm and 40mm guns.
- LST.** Landing Ship, Tank. Seagoing ship with a tank deck in its hold, equipped with two doors and a ramp for permitting tanks to enter or leave the tank deck. The most common transport for the First Armored.
- LVT.** See **Amtrac**.
- LVTA.** See **Amtank**.
- LVTA-1.** Officially, LVT(A)(1). Amtank model employed by the Battalion in the Kwajalein and Guam invasions. Armed with a 37mm cannon and .30-caliber machine guns.
- LVTA-4.** Officially, LVT(A)(4). Amtank model employed by the Battalion in the Okinawa invasion. Armed with a 75mm howitzer, a .50- and a .30-caliber machine gun.
- MG.** Machine gun.
- MT.** Motor transport, a unit responsible for motor vehicle maintenance and operation.
- Nambu.** Japanese light machine gun.
- OCS.** Officer candidate school.
- OD.** Officer of the day.
- Officers' country.** Section of a ship reserved for officers.
- OP.** Observation point, for a forward observer in artillery fire.
- Overhead.** Ceiling.
- Over the hill.** Absent without leave.
- PBM.** A U.S. Navy patrol flying boat.
- Platoon.** A unit which in the First Armored usually consisted of five squads (the crews of five amtanks), equal to about 30 men. Each line company consisted of three platoons and an H&S section.
- Pogey bait.** Candy. Other spellings occur.
- Ranks.** **USMC Commissioned:** 2d lieutenant, 1st lieutenant, captain, major, lieutenant colonel, colonel, brigadier general, major general, lieutenant general, general. **USMC Enlisted:** private, private first-class (PFC), corporal, sergeant, platoon (or staff) sergeant, gunnery (or technical) sergeant, first (or master technical) sergeant, sergeant major.
- SC.** Sub-Chaser; submarine-chaser. A small vessel used in antisubmarine warfare.
- Secure.** To fasten down. To complete. To end a battle.
- Skivvies.** Underwear.
- Scuttlebutt.** Rumor(s), gossip; a drinking fountain, where rumors often start.
- Seabag.** A cylindrical canvas bag for carrying personal gear; duffle bag.
- Seabees.** CBs. Navy Construction Battalions of skilled workmen in combat areas.

416 GLOSSARY

Sick bay Dispensary or hospital for medical services.

Survey. To transfer out for medical reasons. To dispose of (unserviceable clothing or equipment).

Swabbie. Sailor of the U.S. Navy; short for *swabjockey*.

10-In-1 ration. Field ration for ten men, or one man for ten days.

UDT. Underwater Demolition Team. Navy men who, prior to a landing, cleared mines and other hazards from the approaches to beaches. Often called Frogmen.

USO. United Service Organizations, providing entertainment and other services to improve the lot of servicemen.

Wardroom. Officers' quarters aboard ship; more specifically the officers' mess.

WO. Warrant officer, a rank above that of NCOs and below that of commissioned officers.

6 X 6. A 2½-ton truck, usually canvas-covered.

77mm. 77 millimeter, erroneous description of a Japanese 75mm gun on Guam.

782 gear. Personal combat gear.

A ROSTER OF THE BATTALION

The official personnel strength of the First Armored Amphibian Battalion was in the range from 830 to 850. With losses and replacements, however, men came and went. Over the period of overseas service substantially more than 1100 men served with the Battalion. Although the Battalion submitted muster rolls every month in 1944 and 1945, this roster has been compiled principally from just three of these, the only ones available for the purpose. In addition, some names were acquired from unofficial lists and from the recollections of surviving members of the Battalion.

This roster lists 1091 names, but is still less than complete. From available, but imperfect, data, we have tried to list, as known, each man's name, his highest rank, his company affiliation, and his casualty record, if any. For some names, the listing lacks full information. We apologize for errors and omissions. We especially regret that available records have not provided a complete list of casualties in combat.

The following notations apply: KIA = Killed in Action, MIA = Missing in Action, DOW = Died of Wounds, WIA = Wounded in Action, BF = Battle Fatigue, DOI = Died of non-Combat injuries. Battles are indicated by -K for Kwajalein, -G for Guam, and -O for Okinawa, -P for Peleliu. Other areas: -Gc = Guadalcanal, -S = Saipan, -SC = San Clemente, -Sea = At sea.

Rank designations: **Commissioned**— 2d, 1st Lt = 2d or 1st Lieutenant. Capt = Captain. Maj = Major. Lt Col = Lieutenant Colonel. WO = Warrant Officer. **Enlisted**— Pvt = Private. PFC = Private First Class. Corp = Corporal. Sgt = Sergeant. Plat Sgt, Gy Sgt, 1st Sgt = Platoon, Gunnery, or First Sergeant. Staff Sgt, Tech Sgt, MTech Sgt = Staff, Technical, or Master Technical Sergeant. Sgt Maj = Sergeant Major. Asst Cook, Fld Cook, Ch Cook = Assistant, Field, or Chief Cook. Fld Music = Field Music. Navy— Lt(jg) = Lieutenant Junior Grade. Lt(USN) = Lieutenant. Lt Cmdr = Lieutenant Commander. Ph Mate, Ch Ph Mate = Pharmacists or Chief Pharmacists Mate. Blank spaces before a name indicates that information on rank was not available.

Corp Walter B. Achord.	A		PFC Buford F. Bailey	B	
Corp Frank W. Ackerman.	B+D		Pvt George R. Baker	H&S	
PFC John Adamovich.	A		Sgt Jean L. Baker	H&S	
Corp Claude T. Adams.	H&S		Sgt John E. Baker	A	
Corp Dudley H. Adams.	C		PFC Floyd T. Baldwin	H&S	KIA-P
PFC John M. Adams.	B		PFC Robert E. Ball	A	
Corp Fred Addison.	A		Sgt James W. Bandy	H&S	
Gy Sgt Joe M. Aquilar.	C		PFC Charles Barbieri	A	
PFC Orbra L. Akers.	H&S		Tech Sgt Dale L. Barker	D	
1st Lt Edward F. Alex.	C		Corp Kenneth F. Barnes	A	
1st Lt Gerard Alexander.	?		PFC Dallas E. Barnhart	H&S	
Pvt Jack C. Alexander.	B		PFC Raymond W. Barringer	D	
PFC Ray C. Allen.	D		Corp Moses Barrios	D	WIA-O
PFC Robert E. Allison.	A	KIA-G	Corp Esma B. Barron	C	
Staff Sgt Alfred Andenmatten	A		Sgt William C. Bartels	A	
Corp Howard H. Andrews	C		PFC Robert C. Barthuli	D	
PFC Lester R. Armstrong	A		PFC Joseph F. Basich	D	
Gy Sgt William E. Atkinson	C		Corp Joseph C. Baumbach	D	
Corp Nick Avgeres	H&S		Corp Sylvester H. Bazner	C	
PFC William L. Aydelotte	A		PFC Roy E. Beach	C	
PFC Charles C. Bahin	H&S		Corp Keith E. Beadleston	A	

Sgt Ballard F. Beasley	C		PFC Roger I. Brooks	D	
PFC Daniel W. Beck	?		1st Lt Clyde E. Browers	H&S	
PFC Leonard H. Becker	C		PFC E. Jack Brown	A	
Corp Noah Earl Becknell	H&S		Sgt Lawrence E. Brown	C	
Corp Stanley J. Beczkowski	H&S		PFC Millard D. Brown	A	
Plat Sgt Warren R. Beeson	D		Sgt Warren M. Brown	?	
Corp Roger H. Behling	C		Corp William E. Brummond	B	
WO Harold R. Belcher	H&S		PFC George P. Buchanan	B	KIA-G
Corp Billy G. Bell	A		Sgt John J. Buckley	H&S	
Corp George T. Bell	A		PFC Lewis H. Buckner	?	
Corp John J. Benne	H&S		1st Lt Irwin Ronald Buckner	B	
Sgt Dante N. Bentivenga	?		Ph Mate Leo J. Budde	H&S	
PFC David E. Berger	A		1st Lt Luke E. Burch Jr	H&S	
PFC Willard S. Berkson	A		Capt Theodore A. Burge	D	
WO William D. Bethea	H&S		PFC Austin H. Burgett	?	
Staff Sgt Joseph A. Biala	H&S		Corp Wallace E. Burkett	A	
Sgt Chester F. Bielat	D		Corp Carl L. Burney	H&S	
Plat Sgt Charles F. Biggs	A		Corp Dexter S. Burnham	B	
Corp Joseph Bilek	B		PFC Maurice J. Burns	A	
PFC Charles R. Biller	A		Corp William B. Burrum	D	WIA-K
Corp Paul W. Bills	C		Corp James T. Bush	C	
PFC Ernie Bishop	A		PFC George Don Butcher	C	
PFC William B. Black	B		1st Sgt William G. Buttery	A	
PFC Robert C. Blaemire	C		PFC Calvin O. Butts	B	
Corp William S. Blair	?		Corp Richard S. Cahoon	H&S	
PFC William Blatzheim	A	KIA-G	Corp Alvin E. Caldwell	C	WIA-sea
Sgt Marlin G. Blayden	B		Corp Charles L. Calhoun	B+C	
Ph Mate Wilbur L. Bobb	H&S		Corp Gale P. Calhoun	B	
Sgt Ervin P. Bodewig	B	KIA-G	Corp Alexander M. Campbell	A	
Corp Everett T. Boersma	H&S		Fld Cook Charles R. Campbell	B	
Sgt Kramer G. Bohnenberger	A		Corp Joseph L. Campbell	A	
PFC Stanley Bojko	A		PFC Domingo Cano	C	
Plat Sgt René M. Bolduc	D	WIA-O	PFC Henry E. Cantrell	H&S	
Corp Edward E. Boling	B	BF-G	Staff Sgt Ronald U. Caraffi	C	
Plat Sgt Jack A. Bolt	C		Capt Edgar S. Carlson	B	
PFC Arnold W. Bolzman	A		PFC Jordan R. Carlson	A	
Corp Franklin Bonnes	C		PFC Calvin W. Carpenter	A	
PFC Willis D. Booth	D		PFC William R. Carper	A	
Gy Sgt George R. Borstell	D		Corp Abel Carreiro	B	
Corp Freeman N. Bousman	A	KIA-G	Pvt David E. Carroll	?	
PFC David L. Bowman	H&S		PFC Robert E. Carroll	A+C	
Sgt John A. Boylan	B		PFC William J. Carroll	B+A	
PFC Eugene P. Brady	A	KIA-G	Asst Cook George J. Carter	H&S	
Corp George W. Brandon	D		Sgt William H. Carter	C	
PFC James E. Braunn	A	DOW-G	PFC Wilmer Roy Carver	C	
1st Sgt John D. Brehm	B		Corp Floyd Cary	B	
Sgt Paul R. Breme	A	WIA-G	Corp George L. Cash	B	
PFC Loyd L. Brewer	B		PFC Candiloro Catalfano	B	
Ch Cook Vern A. Bridgman	H&S		Corp William D. Cathcart	B	
Fld Cook Bob Brill	H&S		Leslie J. Catto	C	
Corp Harry J. Broderick	A		PFC David F. Cavadini	A	

Corp Paul W. Cavanaugh	H&S		Pvt William E. Dalton	?	
Corp James C. Chandler	B		Corp Armando P. Damiano	B	
Corp Robert A. Charton	D		Corp Ernest L. Davenport	A	WIA-G
PFC Robert S. Cheek	B		Corp J. W. Davis	D	
PFC Leo A. Cheresko	H&S		PFC Marion E. Davis	?	
PFC Richard E. Chetto	D		PFC Robert A. Davis	C	
PFC Arthur J. Childress	D		PFC Robert Davis	D	KIA-K
PFC Zelden J. Christensen	C	WIA-G	Corp Harold E. Dawson	C	
PFC Billy J. Christian	C	KIA-G	PFC Donald D. Dean	A	
PFC George P. Christopoulos	D	KIA-G	Corp George D. De Angelo	D	
PFC Richard E. Churchill	H&S		Plat Sgt Edward Dearduff	B	
Plat Sgt Edwin F. Cieslak	D		Sgt Allen W. Dechaine	B	
Corp Carl B. Cichocki	?		PFC Raymond T. Dee	C	
Corp Arthur W. Clark	A		PFC Arnold A. Degner	C	
Corp James E. Clark	H&S		PFC Dale I. Degner	H&S	
Sgt John R. Clendenen	H&S		Ph Mate Edward J. Deifik	H&S	
PFC Glen E. Cleveland	C		PFC Thomas C. Deivert	A	WIA-O
Sgt Robert L. Coates	C		1st Lt Cecil E. Delahaye	H&S	
PFC Arthur M. Cochran	B		PFC Leland K. Delauer	B	WIA-G
PFC Grady N. Coker	B		Mike Delldonna	A	
Tech Sgt Henry D. Cole	A		Sgt David L. Del Vecchio	D	
Fld Cook John D. Cole	A		Sgt Harry Demchuk	A	DOI-Gc
PFC Thomas I. Coleman Jr	A		Pvt Eddie Dement	A	
PFC James U. Congleton	H&S		PFC Donald E. Dempster	B	
Corp Fred Conner	D	WIA-O	1st Lt Robert V. Denney	H&S	
Ph Mate James J. Connolly	H&S		WO Louis E. De Rousse	C	
Corp Billy D. Conrad	D		PFC Paul R. De Santis	D	
PFC Robert L. Conrad	B		Corp Russell C. Dettmann	A	KIA-O
Corp Robert P. Constance	B		Corp John L. De Vos	A	
PFC Daniel P. Contreras	D		Ch Cook John T. De Witt	H&S	
PFC Leroy Cooper	H&S		Corp Lawrence C. Dhom	D	
Corp Thomas J. Corcoran	B		Sgt Arthur R. Dickison	B	
PFC Buford Corman	?		Sgt Herbert J. Dieterich	?	
Fred H. Cosby	A		Corp Willard V. Dietz	B	
Corp Joseph M. Coto	A		PFC Frank P. Di Julio	B+C	
Corp Richard R. Courtney	H&S		PFC Orville W. Dingleline	B+A	
Corp William F. Cowgill	B		Corp Vito Rock Di Trolio	C	WIA-G
Corp Wilbur F. Cravey	C		Corp Joseph Dolson	B	
PFC Ernest V. Crawford	B		Corp Harold R. Dombrowski	A	
PFC John A. Crawford	C		Corp Willard F. Donovan	C	
Corp George D. Cree	B		1st Lt Edward M. Dooley	B	
Corp Cecil L. Crimm	A	KIA-G	PFC Nolon M. Doss	B	WIA-G
PFC James M. Critchfield	A	WIA-G	PFC Paul H. Dotur	A	
1st Lt Thomas M. Crosby	H&S		Sgt Francis E. Doughty	H&S	
Sgt Lonnie C. Crow	A		Asst Cook Oliver T. Dowling	A	WIA-G
PFC James J. Cruice	B		PFC James L. Downey	D	
PFC Raymond W. Culbertson	C		Sgt Heavron H. Downs	B	
PFC Albert L. Curbeaux	D		PFC David W. Drexel	H&S	WIA-G
PFC Bernard E. Curless	A		PFC Carl E. Drum	B	
1st Lt Milton B. Curtis	D		Ph Mate Eugene W. Dryden	H&S	
PFC Forest F. "Chick" Cutright	C	WIA-G	Corp Richard C. Duhe	B	

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Sgt Clement H. Dunlap	B	WIA-G	PFC Edward J. Foster	D	
Staff Sgt Milton E. Dunnam	D		Pvt Ray N. Foster	A	
Sgt William E. Dunn	A		PFC William L. Foy	C	
1st Lt James W. Dupree	D+C		Pvt Harry D. Frank	A	KIA-G
PFC Maurice Earl Durham	A		Corp George A. Franklin	H&S	
Corp Sim J. Durrance	B		Sgt Kenneth G. Freeman	C	
PFC James D. Duval	B		Capt Chesley O. Freemonth	H&S	
PFC James E. Dyer	B		Plat Sgt Ford M. French	B	
PFC Robert V. Earle	A		Ch Cook Lewis N. Frey	A	
PFC Milburn M. Easley	A		PFC William R. Fried	H&S	
PFC Barney J. Edmonson	D	KIA-K	Sgt John Frisone	B	
Corp Homer H. Edwards	C	WIA-K	PFC George W. Frye	D	WIA-G
Sgt Dale W. Ellestad	C		Gy Sgt John W. Frye	D	WIA-G
Corp Gale Ellis	C		PFC Robert C. Frye	A	
PFC Arne J. Elvejord	A		PFC Robert Fullerton	A	
Corp Fred R. Engel	C		MTech Sgt Alton D. Gabriel	B	
Sgt George B. Engelmann	D	WIA-G	Plat Sgt Francis A. Galdis	B	
PFC William R. Eppinger	D		Corp Beauford A. Galien	C	
PFC Carl Erickson	A		Corp Allan R. Galpin	D	
PFC Dan O. Eriksen	C		PFC James C. Gamble	B	
PFC Buren F. Erwin	?		PFC Joe C. Garcia	B	
Plat Sgt Julian Escobedo	H&S		1st Lt Thomas Joseph Garfield	A	WIA-G
Corp John A. Eubank	A		PFC Sidney J. Gautreaux	H&S	
Capt William L. Eubank	C	WIA-G	Corp Earl F. Geist	A	
Corp Edmund Evangelista	B		PFC Ernest F. Gericke	A	WIA-K
Plat Sgt Harvey B. Evans	B	BF-G	Corp William D. Germain	A	
Sgt John T. Evans	D		PFC Melder N. German	H&S	
Sgt Maj Alex Ewoniuk	C		PFC Roger B. Gibson	C	WIA-O
PFC Grady D. Farmer	C		WO Walter L. Gibson	B	
PFC William J. Farrell	D		Sgt Jack M. Gilchrist	C	
PFC Stephen R. Favreau	?		PFC Cletus M. Gilleland	D	WIA-G
Ph Mate Alfred C. Fennell	H&S		PFC Ralph C. Glenn	H&S	
Corp Donald L. Ferchau	A		Sgt Arwyn W. Godfrey	B	
Sgt Lawrence M. Ferguson	H&S		Sgt Walter A. Godlewski	H&S	
Don Ferrell	C		Sgt William P. Goforth	C	
Corp Ellery H. Ferson	B		Sgt Mayer S. Goldberg	D	
PFC Donald J. Fiedler	A	KIA-G	Corp George L. Good	A	
PFC Henry F. Finney	B		Corp William L. Goss	B	
1st Lt Robert A. Fish	A	WIA-G	Staff Sgt Jackson V. Grace	H&S	
Fld Cook Harold J. Fitzgerald	B		Corp James W. Graham	C	
Fld Cook Harold S. Fitzpatrick	C		Corp Meryln G. Graham	B	
Sgt Harley Robert Flack	C		Corp Harry B. Granlee	C	DOI-S
PFC Luther M. Flattum	B		PFC Marvin W. Grantham	D	KIA-K
Corp Henry F. Fleissner	D		PFC Earl L. Gray	A	
PFC Robert D. Flinn	B		PFC Melvin E. Greenberg	C	
PFC Vincent J. Fojkenis	A		Corp Harold Greenblatt	D	
PFC Clarence E. Follrath	?		PFC Arthur D. Greene	?	
PFC David Fontaine	B		PFC John "Pat" Greene	B	
Corp Clarence R. Forbes	D		1st Lt Richard P. Greene	C+D	
PFC Thomas J. Fortini	?		Pvt William E. Greer	C	
PFC Ray M. Forza	D		Corp Albert F. Gregory	C	

Corp Melvin A. Greulich	H&S		PFC Herbert A. Hedges	H&S	
PFC Thomas F. Grigsby	B		PFC Terence K. Hedgpeth	C	
Pvt John T. Grisham	?		PFC Rudolph G. Heibel	B	KIA-G
Corp Orval C. Grissom	B	WIA-G	Sgt Francis J. Heine	B	
1st Lt Harold O. Grothem	C	WIA-G	Corp Leonard Heller	C	
Corp Donald O. Grubb	H&S		Sgt Lucius Q. Henderson	A	
Sgt Leo L. Guidry	D		Sgt Roy B. Henderson	B	
Sgt Dewey H. Guilford	D		Corp Harry K. Hennig	A	
PFC Ronald B. Gumtow	B		PFC Lillard T. Henson	B	
Pvt Roy F. Gunya	H&S		Sgt Elmer D. Heppner	C	WIA-G
Sgt Harold Gurley	B		PFC Sidney V. Herdejurgan	H&S	
Sgt Robert S. Guss	A		Sgt LeRoy F. Hesse	A	KIA-G
Sgt Odis A. Guthrie	A		PFC Clarence E. Hettenhausen	B	MIA-O
Gy Sgt Conrad Haas	H&S		Pvt Harold E. Higday	H&S	
Sgt Joseph Hada	D		PFC Earl M. Hill	B	
PFC Bernard T. Haines	A		William Hill	?	
Corp Ervin T. Hall	A		Gy Sgt John E. Hillock	C	
PFC Warren J. Halleen	?		Corp Maynard W. Hislop	B	
PFC Frank L. Halter	B		2d Lt Robert C. Hoffman	H&S	
Ph Mate Charles R. Hamilton	H&S		Sgt Norman J. Hogan	H&S	
Sgt Wilmer T. Hamilton	?		Corp Robert T. Hogan	C	
Fld Cook Ray W. Hamlin	A		1st Lt Harold D. Holder	C	
PFC Earl P. Hanley	D		Sgt Maj Paul DuB. Holmes	H&S	
Corp Seal S. Hann	B+D		Corp Orville B. Houdek	D	
Sgt Milton L. Hansard	B		Sgt Donald C. Houston	B	
Corp Lester W. Hanson	D	WIA-G	PFC Junior E. Howell	A	
PFC Robert H. Hanson	C		Corp Edwin A. Huet	B+D	
Corp Hilbert G. Harbke	B	WIA-G	PFC Robert E. Hughes	D	
Corp Harry E. Harbour	B		PFC Wallace N. Hutton	B	
PFC Clinton Harless	C		Corp John T. Iles Jr	D	
Corp Cecil E. Harp	A		PFC Dallas E. Jackson	B	
PFC Leslie E. Harrell	B		Corp Erwin D. Jagow	A	
PFC Eldon D. Harris	A		Corp Joe P. Jaimes	A	
Sgt Floyd Harris	B		Corp John F. Jakela	D	WIA-O
Corp Max G. Harris	C		Corp Dean R. Jamis	C	
Sgt Paul Lacy Harris	B		PFC Oscar E. Jeffers	D	
PFC Charles Harshaney	H&S		PFC Cleve E. Jensen	A	
Staff Sgt Kenneth T. Hart	B		Corp Raymond E. Jimerson	B+C	
Asst Cook Michael J. Hartigan	C		Sgt Donald R. Johnson	C	
Corp Floyd E. Harvey	A		Fld Cook Max B. Johnson	A	
PFC John E. Harvey	C		Corp William A. Johnson	A	
PFC Wallace D. Harwood	C	WIA-G	PFC Gill S. Johnston	A	
Corp Clarence O. Haselden	D		Asst Cook Arthur E. Jones	D	
Corp William M. Hasson	B+C		PFC Byron H. Jones	C	
Pvt Alfred L. Hatfield	B		Corp Earl W. Jones	H&S	
Sgt Wiley C. Hatley	A		PFC Harold E. Jones	B	
PFC Ralph E. Hauth	A	WIA-O	Pvt Lloyd E. Jones	D	
PFC Elza Hayes	?		Corp Thomas M. Joseph	B	
PFC Guy U. Hayes	C		Corp Loren E. Joslin	B	
PFC Howard W. Hayes	A	MIA-G	PFC Russell C. Joyner	C	
PFC Albert Hector	B		Pvt ? Judd	A	DOW-O

Pete Kaleita	B		PFC Leonard J. Le Blanc	?	
Corp Stephen J. Kalmar	B		PFC Armand P. Le Clair	B	
Tech Sgt Wilbert H. Kaping	C		Corp Elga G. Lee	A	
PFC Samuel Kasakoff	D		PFC George Legino	B	
PFC Gary G. Kazanjian	D		Sgt William H. Leonhard	C	
Corp Francis W. Kearney	B		PFC Max Levine	H&S	
Lt (jg) John J. Keenoy	H&S		PFC Calvin W. Lewis	B	
Pvt Malcom J. Keep	D		PFC William K. Lewis	B	
PFC Harold E. Keith	C	WIA-K	Staff Sgt Daniel Lieberman	A	
PFC Gene E. Kelly	A		Pvt Orien R. Light	C	
Corp John F. Kelly	D	WIA-G	Corp Eugene A. Lillie	C	
PFC William J. Kennedy	D		Capt Owen P. Lillie	A	KIA-G
Sgt Robert E. Kermode	C		Corp George E. Lincoln	B+D	
Staff Sgt Arthur W. King	D		PFC John E. Lindberg	D	
PFC George E. King	B		Corp William R. Lindsey	C	
Corp James E. King	D		Ph Mate Carl D. Little	H&S	
Corp Robert J. King	B		1st Lt Ellis N. Livingston	A	
PFC Wayne J. King	D	KIA-G	Corp Donald R. Logan	?	
Corp Charles E. Kirk	B		Sgt Joseph B. Logue	D	
Corp Thomas V. Kiser	B		PFC Harlan C. Long	B	
Corp Lloyd L. Kitch	B		Pvt Ralph M. Lopez	A	
Corp Edward W. Kitson	B	BF-G	Lynn Lorson	C	
PFC William M. Kline	?		1st Lt Wiley W. Loughmiller	A	WIA-G
PFC Walter L. Knispel	D	WIA-O	Lt Cmdr Leslie J. Luallen	H&S	
1st Lt James H. Knox	D		Sgt John P. Lucek	C	
PFC Norman J. Kocikowski	H&S		Plat Sgt Phillip D. Luchenbill	C	
PFC Richard H. Koesel	A	WIA-G	Corp Loren B. Luckett	H&S	
Corp George Koketko	D		PFC William A. Ludy	A	
Sgt Thomas G. Komaroski	H&S		PFC George W. Lybarger	D	KIA-G
PFC Charles B. Koski	A		PFC Shirley B. Lyons	B	
PFC Henry A. Kozlowski	B	WIA-G	Corp Robert M. Lytton	D	WIA-G
PFC Kenneth K. Kreider	D		PFC Donald L. McCarthy	B	
Sgt Allen A. Kroyer	B		Sgt William T. McCartney	A	KIA-K
Corp Carl E. Krueger	B		1st Lt Calvin E. McClain	B	KIA-G
PFC Louis G. Krueger	A		Sgt Ralph R. McCormack	B	
PFC John F. Kubatzke	A		Sgt Francis S. McCormick	A	
PFC Joseph G. Kula	D		PFC Ralph N. McCrory	B	KIA-G
Ch Cook Ernest F. Kunhart	H&S		Corp Alexander Z. McCulley	C	
Corp William J. La Ferriere	A		PFC James C. McDaniel Jr	C	WIA-G
Corp Arthur P. Lafond	C		PFC Gerald F. McDonough	?	
PFC Ronald J. La Forge	B	WIA-G	Capt Robert E. McDowell	D	
PFC William M. Lappin	A		Sgt Michael A. McGann	D	WIA-O
PFC Cecil E. Larsen	H&S	KIA-G	PFC Billy E. McGowan	B	
PFC Leonard S. Larson	C	WIA-G	Corp Earl J. McGuire	D	
PFC Max E. Larson	H&S		Corp James R. McIntyre	B	
PFC Jack M. Laskaris	C		PFC John F. McKay	D	
PFC Albert C. Lassley	A		Corp Howard L. McLaughlin	A	
1st Sgt Lawrence N. Laughridge	D		Corp David P. MacPherson	C	
PFC James E. Lawlor	D		Corp John D. McRae	B	
Sgt Joseph M. Layton	A		PFC Raymond A. Madewell	H&S	
Ph Mate Arnold D. Lazinbat	H&S		PFC John M. Main	?	

PFC Milton E. Malinowski	D		1st Sgt William H. Miner	C	
PFC Billy R. Malone	B		Capt Marvin E. Mitchell	H&S	
Sgt Joseph J. Mancini	B		PFC Gerald G. Mohney	B	
Corp Jacob Mandelbaum	C	WIA-K	Corp William C. Moir	D	
Sgt Nickolas A. Manfred	D	KIA-G	Sgt William E. Moller	H&S	
Plat Sgt Carl B. Mangum	A		Corp William Monroe	C	
Sgt Robert W. Mann	A		PFC John W. Monteith	D	
Corp Richard P. Manning Jr	D		Sgt Daniel E. Montgomery	A	
PFC Thomas C. Manson	A		Sgt Elmer F. Montgomery	D	
Corp Ernest J. Marcelt	H&S		Sgt Payton C. Montgomery	C	
Corp Rudolph Markovic	A		Plat Sgt Alfred G. Montrucchio	D	
PFC Henry Martel	D		PFC Thomas W. Moody	D	
Corp Joe Martel	D		C. J. Moore	D	
PFC Charles W. Martin	B	WIA-O	PFC Guy J. Moore	H&S	
Tech Sgt Raymond J. Martin	H&S		PFC Raymond Moore	B+A	
Corp Thomas B. Martindale	C		Corp Harvey C. Morgenstern	A	DOI-Sea
Corp Stephen Marusky	B		Corp Joseph A. Morin	H&S	
Pvt John A. Marzolf	C	WIA-K	PFC James W. Morrall	C	
PFC Robert F. Mason	?		Corp William H. Morris	A	
PFC Alex Mate Jr	C		Sgt Elmer Morris Jr	A	
PFC Robert G. Matheny	A	WIA-G	Sgt James Morrison	H&S	
Sgt Henry D. Mathis	C		PFC James M. Morrow	H&S	
PFC Walter S. Matowitz	D		PFC Ted H. Moss	H&S	
Corp Walter E. Matura	C		Corp Marvin S. Motylinski	C	
Corp Joseph E. Matweishyn	A		PFC Pete Mucci	C	
PFC Ira T. May	A		PFC Howard L. Mueller	A	
Corp Theard L. Mayeux	C		Corp Allen E. Mulkey	D	
Gy Sgt Daniel H. Maynard	A		PFC Eugene L. Mull	A	
Corp Theodore F. Mayrhofen	C		PFC William M. Mulligan	A	WIA-G
PFC Joseph L. Meadows	B		Corp John P. Murphy	D	DOW-G
Corp Charles T. Mellor	D		Corp Russell C. Murphy	D	
Staff Sgt Herbert H. Menks	C		Sgt Lawrence E. Murray	D	
Sgt Russell L. Mereness	H&S		Corp Richard W. Mussenbrock	A	KIA-O
Corp Larry R. Merritt	A		Plat Sgt Charles L. Nalevanko	A	
Corp Roy S. Merwin	H&S		PFC Douglas W. Nash	A	WIA-G
Sgt Albert A. Messinger	C		Corp Douglas R. Nations	D	
Lt Col Louis Metzger	H&S	Bn Cmdr	PFC Don C. Neal	D	WIA-G
Corp Claude D. Michie	?		PFC Louie J. Neal	B	WIA-O
Corp Ralph Thomas Miers	C		Corp Harry L. Neely	C	
PFC Glennon H. Mikus	A		PFC Victor A. Neiberger	A	
PFC Robert Miles	B		Robert E. Neilan	B	
PFC Alan C. Miller	D		Corp John M. Nemeth	D	
PFC Edward D. W. Miller	H&S		PFC Wesley M. Netherland	B	
PFC Harold K. Miller	D		Charles L. Nicholson	B	
PFC Harvard V. Miller	A		PFC William T. Nicpon	B	
PFC James W. Miller	B		Corp Russel R. Nielsen	B	
Sgt Lloyd L. Miller	H&S		Corp Thomas E. Njos	H&S	
Corp Merlin K. Miller	C	WIA-G	PFC Buford G. Noe	B	
PFC Walter K. Miller	C		Corp William F. Noel	B	
Corp William J. Miller	C		Sgt Leo F. Nolan	D	
PFC Willie F. Miller	H&S		Gy Sgt George Nolting	?	

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PFC Dean E. Nordby	B		PFC Marvin M. Paul	B	
PFC Clinton D. Norrell Jr	D		Sgt Frank J. Pavone	?	
PFC Andrew A. Norton	D		Sgt James F. Pelton	D	
Corp Robert J. Norton	B		Pvt Henry Pelzar	A	
PFC Michael Notarangelo	B		PFC Robert E. Pendergraft	C	
Plat Sgt Ray H. Nugent	A		PFC Don V. Penfold	?	
Corp Edward A. Nycz	C		PFC Wallace M. Penn	B	
PFC Joseph B. O'Brien	D		James Pennell	C	
PFC Richard J. O'Brien	?		Corp Orville E. Pennington	D	WIA-G
PFC Thomas J. O'Leary	B		Corp Banks B. Pennington	A	
PFC Thomas R. O'Meara	A	KIA-G	Corp Albert L. Pepper	H&S	
Sgt Herbert O'Neal	B		PFC Charles E. Perkins	B	
PFC Robert M. O'Neil	B	KIA-G	1st Lt Lester L. Perry	D+A	
PFC Joseph P. O'Neill	A		PFC Charles E. Peters	A	
Corp Daniel O'Shea	H&S		PFC Dean R. Petersen	A	KIA-G
Ch Cook Caulis L. Odom	C		Corp Sophus J. Peterson	H&S	
PFC Valentine L. Ofenlock	D		Tech Sgt Michael F. Petruzzi	H&S	
M. Olds III	B		PFC Charles T. Phillips	B	
Corp Edward S. Oldynski	H&S		PFC Arthur Piacentini	A	
PFC William G. Olinger	C	WIA-G	Corp Robert W. Pierce	A	
Corp Charles E. Oliver	D		PFC Robert G. Pierce	A	
Frank S. Oliver	B		Sgt Paul K. Pierson	C	
Pvt William C. Oliver	B		Sgt Relma H. Piner	H&S	
Corp Daniel J. Olsen	C		Corp Guido S. Pironti	B	
PFC Robert W. Olsen	C		PFC Robert D. Pittman	B	WIA-G
PFC Henry W. Oltmanns	C		PFC John J. Plankers	A	
PFC Melvin F. Orlowski	B		Sgt Julian B. Pocius	B	
WO James L. Osborne	H&S		PFC Vincent V. Pojkenis	A	
PFC Joseph S. Osieczzonek	C		PFC Stanley P. Polaniec	A	
PFC Jesse B. Oswalt	D	WIA-G	PFC Herman L. Pollard	C	
PFC Robert C. Otto	D	WIA-O	Corp Arthur Polowski	C	
Joseph L. Outlaw	B		PFC John C. Pompura	H&S	
Corp Charles E. Owens	B		PFC Jack C. Poole	C	
Clyde Oxner	C		Fld Cook Leslie G. Pope	C	
1st Lt Thomas T. Oyler	C	WIA-G	Corp Ralph E. Pope	A	
PFC Sam L. Page	A		PFC Byron H. Porter	H&S	
Sgt William P. Page	H&S		PFC Allen E. Post	B	WIA-G
Sgt Ralph L. Palmer	C		Corp Irving L. Post	D+A	
Corp George Papalias	D		PFC William C. Powell	C	
PFC Edmund T. Papciak	H&S		PFC Albert E. Powers	D	
Corp Ivan H. Parker	D		Sgt George G. Powers	H&S	
Corp Arthur G. Parkhurst	C		PFC Joseph T. Powers	H&S	
PFC Floyd L. Parks	B		PFC Herbert E. Priest	B+A	WIA-G
PFC Harold W. Parks	B		PFC Walter A. Pruitt	D	
Corp Charles R. Parsons	B		PFC Joseph M. Psuich	B	
Wilbur Partington	D		Sgt Louis P. Puder	H&S	WIA-G
Corp Thomas S. Pate	B		PFC Allen M. Pyle	C	
PFC Gerald A. Patnaude	B		PFC Billy J. Pyle	A	
Capt James A. C. Patrick	H&S	BF-G	Sgt Thomas E. Quail	A	
Don J. Patrissi	A		Corp Earl W. Quiel	C	
Corp Harry L. Paul	D	WIA-O	Raymond J. Quimette	B	

Corp Warren G. Radford	B		Sgt Seni V. Rossi	H&S	
Corp W. C. Raines	A		PFC Joseph Roth	A	
PFC Victor Rainey	C		Corp Pedro Ruiz	B	
Pvt Robert L. Ralston	?		Fld Music Joe N. Rusk	H&S	
PFC Reese Ransom	B		PFC Herbert S. Russell	?	
Corp Donald L. Rath	C		Sgt John C. Ryan	B	
PFC Franklin C. Rauch	B		PFC Robert E. Ryan	B	
PFC John L. Ray	C		Corp Bruce A. Rylott	A	KIA-G
PFC Junior W. Ray	C		PFC Thomas Sadlier	?	
Pvt William D. Ray	C	KIA-K	Pvt Leonard D. Sage	C	
Pvt David M. Reeves	H&S		Corp James M. Sallis	C	WIA-G
PFC John W. Regentz	D		PFC G. C. Sanders	D	
PFC Clarence E. Reisig	B		Sgt James W. Sanders	A	
Corp Carlton S. Renhard	D		PFC Jesse Sandoval	H&S	
Corp Sylvester Reo	D		Sgt Paul J. Sandri	C	
Plat Sgt Oliver Rice	B		Sgt Anthony J. Santangelo	H&S	
Corp Bernard M. Rich	A		Corp William P. Santiago	C	
PFC Leonard R. Richman	?		Corp Wilfred C. Sarpy	B	
Ph Mate Clarence O. Riddle	H&S		Sgt Irwin G. Saville	A	KIA-G
Corp Alexander D. Rider	B		Corp Franklin M. Savoth	B+A	
PFC Otto Riebock Jr	B		Corp Glen R. Sawyer	C	
Bill Riggs	C		Corp Alfonse W. Scerbo	C	
Corp Franklin M. Riley	D		PFC Karl A. Schalka	H&S	
PFC Ray H. Riley	?		Corp Donald Scharf	D	
PFC Mancil G. Rinehart	C		PFC John E. Schmidt	C	
Corp Patsy M. Riola	A		Sgt Walter A. Schmitt	H&S	
PFC Arthur A. Rios	B		Corp Cyril J. Schneid	C	
Pvt George H. Rivers	D		PFC Clifton E. Schneider	B	
Corp Edward G. Rizkalla	C	WIA-O	Sgt Arthur D. Schnitzer	D	
Sgt George F. Roberts	D		Corp Edward J. Schultz	C	
PFC Harold L. Roberts	D		Corp Robert L. Schwaninger	A	
Corp Raymond F. Roberts	D		Corp Frederick W. Schwantes	A	
Fld Cook Travis Roberts	B		Sgt Harry J. Scott	B	
Sgt William C. Roberts	C		PFC James W. Scott	H&S	
Corp J. D. Robertson	B		PFC John L. Scott	A	WIA-G
1st Lt Leroy Robertson	A	WIA-G	PFC Walter D. Scott	A	
Corp Everett C. Robinett	C		Corp Michael J. Scuderi	C	
Corp Joseph Robinson	A		Corp Paul J. Sears	D	
Corp Plasador Robles	C		WO Glenn E. Seifert	H&S	
Pvt George I. Rock	C	WIA-G	Corp Lowell G. Seifert	D	
Corp Raymond H. Rodgers	A		PFC Verlin E. Sell	B	
Sgt Hudson E. Rodrock	D		Corp Albert A. Sellers	B	
Sgt William O. Roecker	D		PFC Gerardo E. Serrone	A	KIA-G
Corp John M. Rogan	C		Fld Cook Lloyd A. Setzer	D	
Sgt James K. Rogers	H&S		Corp Elwin J. Sevier Jr	C	
Sgt Luther Rogers	D		Sgt William T. Shader	A	
Corp William J. Rogers	C		PFC Robert R. Shamblin	B	
PFC Glenn W. Roloff	A		Staff Sgt John J. Shamus	H&S	
Corp Robert W. Rooney	A		Sgt Coy E. Sharp	H&S	
1st Sgt John R. Rosenberger	H&S		Fld Cook Lawrence Sheathelm	C	
Tech Sgt Theodore E. Ross	H&S		PFC Sammy J. Sheckels	D	

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Corp Robert C. Shepard	D		Asst Cook Ernest W. Spoon	A	
PFC Raymond J. Shereda	H&S		Walter D. Sprague	B	
Corp Wendell E. Sherrick	H&S		Corp Carl H. Spry	D	
Corp James A. Shiley	D		Corp Norman H. Spurlock	D	
PFC Earl E. Shipley	C		PFC James K. Steele	B	
Sgt Gerald A. Shippee	A	WIA-G	PFC Homer F. Stephens	D	
Lt (USN) John J. Shute	H&S		PFC James E. Stephens	D	
PFC Ross E. Siddoway	D		Corp Rudolph Stephens	D	
PFC William E. Siebler	C		Sgt George S. Stevens	D	
PFC Jerome P. Sikora	A	WIA-G	Sgt James F. Stevens	C	
PFC Seymour Silverstein	C		PFC Russell A. Stevens	B	
MTech Bernard P. Simmons	B		Pvt George L. Stillman	?	
Corp Wilbur T. Simon	C		Sgt Robert Stilwell	D	
Bill E. Simpson	D		PFC Francis W. Stockwell	B	KIA-P
PFC Charles E. Sims	D		Sgt Almus F. Stoker	B	
PFC Lorenzo B. Singletary	C		Sgt Vertus P. Stone	C	
PFC Newt T. Sirmons	D		Pvt Richard T. Story	D	
PFC Forrest H. Skeesick	B		Corp Charles F. Strack	B	
Pvt Carl L. Slough	C		PFC Allen J. Stringer	D	
Corp Victor A. Smerker	A		PFC Russell C. Strohacker	D	
PFC Arlo D. Smith	D	WIA-K	PFC Norman J. Strom	D	
Corp Durward B. Smith	A	WIA-G	Sgt Sherman L. Strother	D	MIA-SC
Sgt George R. Smith	D	WIA-K	Corp Loren "Mel" Struthers	C	
Corp James W. Smith	H&S		PFC Leonard L. Suko	C	
WO Kenneth L. Smith	A		Corp Daniel J. Sullivan	A	
Leo C. Smith	B		Sgt Paul Sutton	B	
Corp Leonard H. Smith	C		PFC Dayton Swails	A	
Corp Noel E. Smith	A		Sgt Richard T. Swartz	A	
PFC Raymond A. Smith	D		PFC Donald C. Swedlund	D	
Corp Richard W. Smith	D		PFC John E. Sweeney	D	WIA-O
PFC Ronald F. Smith	B		Corp Wallace A. Sweum	B	
Corp Thomas E. Smith	H&S		Harry Swiegle	C	
PFC Warren R. Smith	C		Corp Thaddeus J. Szczypkowski	D	
Wayne A. Smith	B		Plat Sgt Raymond J. Szeszycki	H&S	
PFC Charles C. Smithson	D	WIA-G	Frank Szymanski	H&S	
Ted J. Snaveley	B		Sgt Ralph H. Taber	D	WIA-K
Corp Byron G. Sneva	C		Ph Mate Derwood D. Tadlock	?	
PFC George Solus Jr	C		2d Lt Gordon N. Taft	D	
Corp Burnard W. Sommers	D		Pvt Marvin R. Tanis	D	
Corp Harold I. Sommers	C		PFC William F. Tanner	?	
Pvt Elvin R. Sorensen	A		Corp Lamar Tarbutton	B	
Sgt Buford L. Sorrell	D		Corp Avery H. Terry	B	
PFC Vona K. Sorrels	H&S		Corp James G. Terry	D	
Corp George W. Spangler	B		Corp James W. Tharp	C	
Corp William G. Sparks	B		Sgt John A. Theriot	D	
Corp Thomas M. Speck	A	WIA-G	Sgt Edwin C. Thomas	H&S	
Plat Sgt John W. Spelce	A		Sgt George H. Thomas	D	WIA-G
Sgt Robert N. Spencer	B		PFC Nathaniel G. Thomas	B	
1st Lt Charles F. Spilman	A		PFC Russell D. Thomas	B	WIA-G
Sgt David Splatt	H&S		Corp Albert R. Thompson	D	WIA-G
PFC Gottlieb K. Spoerle	B		PFC Gerald L. Thompson	C	WIA-G

Corp Lamar A. Thompson	B		PFC Richard L. Warp	D	
Corp Donald P. Thorn	C		Corp David S. Watkins	H&S	
Staff Sgt Herman J. Thorn	C		Corp Elwin D. Watson	B	
Pvt Jim B. Thornberry	D		PFC Samuel H. Webb	H&S	
2d Lt Hillard D. Thorpe	H&S		Sgt Donald C. Webster	C	
PFC Charles O. Tichenor	C		W. A. Webster	?	
PFC Lloyd E. Tidd	D		Pvt Arthur Webtrick	H&S	
PFC Leroy S. Tilden	B		PFC Richard Weiss	D	
Staff Sgt Thomas A. Timmons	D+B		Corp John W. Wells	D	
WO John W. Townsend	H&S		Sgt Leroy D. Werley	D	
PFC Jack L. Tracy	C		Sgt Frank F. Wesson	D	WIA-G
Corp John H. Trapp	B	WIA-O	PFC Martin C. Weyers	D	
Corp George W. Tremblay	B		Staff Sgt Edward H. Whatley	C	
2d Lt Charles T. Trippe	D		Grant T. Wheelin	D	
Staff Sgt Edward A. Trosper	D		PFC Roy E. White	?	
Corp Jacob Trupp	H&S	WIA-O	Corp Clarence Leo Whitlock	D	
Ch Ph Mate Wallace Tuckey	H&S		Pvt Ray Whittemore	H&S	
Sgt Elton P. Turley	C		PFC Robert E. Wier	B	
PFC Houston L. Turner	A		Corp Andrew J. Wiernasz	?	
Corp Vance F. Turnipseed	C		E. E. Wieser	?	
Corp Robert L. Tuttle	H&S		PFC William J. Wigand	D	
PFC Frank Umbdenstock	H&S		Lauren M. Wigger	D	
PFC Harold E. Ungemach	D		Gy Sgt Carl L. Wigley	H&S	
Corp Richard J. Vandello	D		Plat Sgt Paul B. Wigsten	D	
Corp Layton A. Vandenberg	H&S		Staff Sgt Almon M. Wilcox	A	
Corp Howard W. Van Kessel	D		Fld Cook Clyde H. Wiliford	B	
PFC Richard P. Van Paris	A		Donald Willett	B	
PFC Rudolph J. Vasquez	H&S		PFC Eddie A. Williams	D	KIA-K
Gy Sgt Glen E. Vaughan	B		Corp Harry Willis	D	
Asst Cook Herman A. Vernon	D		Pvt James F. Willmes	H&S	
Sgt James O. Vernon	A		Sgt Robert E. Wilmey	C	
Corp Donald Vickers	B		PFC Billy D. Wilson	C	
Corp Robert G. Vickery	B		Gy Sgt Daniel L. Wilson	C	
PFC Virgil G. Viles	D		Corp John Henry Wilson	A	WIA-G
PFC Derk A. Vloedman	D		Corp John Herbert Wilson	A	
Corp Richard "Al" Vogel	H&S		Corp Joseph C. Wilson	B	WIA-G
Corp Joseph O. Voigt	D		Corp Robert B. Wilson	D	
James C. Jim Vrba	H&S		Capt William F. Wilson	B+A	
Corp Archibald Waddington	A		Staff Sgt Eugene K. Winchester	B	
Pvt William Walker	C		Asst Cook Elbert B. Winn	D	
Corp Alvin A. Wallace	B		Corp Milton E. Wirth	C	
PFC Harsh Pat Wallace	C		Corp Elvin E. Wisser	C	
Corp J. R. Wallace	D		James Witherspoon	H&S	
PFC Beaufort B. Walling	D		PFC John L. Witherspoon	A	WIA-G/DOI-S
PFC Roger W. Walls	H&S		Corp Glen F. Witmer	C	
Ch Cook Alvin F. Walters	A		PFC Clayton L. Wolf	A	
PFC Raymond E. Wanders	H&S		Corp James P. Wood	A	
Brian Ward	H&S/A?		Sgt William H. Wood	H&S	
Thomas J. Ward	D		Sgt Harmon H. Woods	D	
PFC Darcie F. Ware	C		Pvt John T. Woods	D	
Maj Richard G. Warga	H&S		Corp Thomas E. Woods	H&S	

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Corp Richard C. Woolf	B		Plat Sgt James D. Young	D	
Corp Aleck B. Worden	A		PFC Armando B. Yslas	B	
PFC Gene H. Work	D		Sgt Michael Zadarosni	A	WIA-G
Sgt Frank R. Worteck	A	WIA-G	Corp Raymond S. Zakarczany	D	
Sgt Paul V. Wright	B		Ch Cook Vincent Zandarski	D	
Corp Richard L. Wright	D		Corp Walter Zator	C	
PFC Matthew A. Wronski	D		PFC Stephen J. Zek	?	
PFC Jack D. Wurl	H&S		Corp Carl Richard Zenger	D	
PFC James E. Wylemski	D		Plat Sgt Francis J. Ziemba	H&S	
Corp Theodore S. Yahr	H&S		Corp Victor J. Zigmond	C	
PFC George W. Yarnell	D		Pvt Howard H. Zitnik	D	KIA-G
PFC Clarence A. Yates	B		Gy Sgt Carl F. Zitterbart	D	
Corp Coy E. Yates	B		Corp Louis J. Zuccaro	H&S	
WO Edward A. Yates Jr	D		Sgt Henry Zweigel	C	KIA-G
PFC George P. Yde	D	WIA-O			

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